AA000 093 492 7
UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY

nia

THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

GIFT OF

William B. Vasels

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/theologicalmisce15prieiala

THE

Theological and Miscellaneous

WORKS

OF

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D. F.R.S. &c.

WITH

NOTES,

BY THE EDITOR.

VOLUME XV.

Containing

DISCOURSES ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

Discourses on the Evidence of Revealed Religion,

AND

SINGLE SERMONS.

PRINTED BY GEORGE SMALLFIELD, HACKNEY.

9815
.P93
v.15

PREFACE

BY THE

EDITOR.

AFTER reprinting the Four Volumes which contained Dr. Priestley's *Notes on the Bible*, I was not aware of any part of his Theological Works which could more suitably follow them than his Sermons. I have, therefore, been solicitous to bring into this Volume all those which he published in England; designing that the next shall include the Sermons which he published, and those which he left for publication, in America.

They who are at all acquainted with Dr. Priestley's life or writings, need not to be informed that his favourite character was that of a Christian Minister. Here he appears to exemplify that character, not with the assumption of *Episcopalian* or *Presbyterian* superiority, but as a diligent and affectionate assistant to his Christian brethren; contributing to build them up in their most holy faith, and to make them thoroughly furnished to every good work. The dates of these Sermons extend through twenty years of the Author's life; the latter part of that period distinguished by the Christian fortitude with which he endured severe trials and injuries, from wicked and unreasonable men, who were too much encouraged by the tardy and uncertain protection which he received from the Government of his country.

The *Discourses*, collected and published by the Author, in 1787, amidst their *various subjects*, sufficiently discover a prevalent design, which he expresses (p. 3) to "represent every thing of a speculative nature, as subservient to practice;" while the Sermons preached to the Societies at Leeds and Birmingham furnish a lasting testimony of their Author's

838359

affectionate and edifying connexion with those congregations.

The *Discourses on the Evidence of Revealed Religion*, comprehend (except two of them, published several years before) some of the latest of Dr. Priestley's ministerial services at Hackney. These *Discourses* were republished in America, where he proceeded further on the same subjects, as will appear in the following volume.

The *Single Sermons*, which are now first collected, contain some topics, well calculated to excite the Author's solicitude during that eventful period which included the last six years of his residence in England. Of the *Slave-Trade*, which here receives his just reprehension, he lived not, however, to see the Abolition; and the guilt of *Slave-holding* is yet, I fear, as little considered by the people of Britain as by *American* and *West-Indian* planters. The *Test Laws* also, which the Author so well exposed, still, after thirty years of silent endurance, remain to oppress the conscientious Dissenter; whether he be one who prefers the *Church of Rome* to that of *England*, or one of those who reason more justly, that Christianity can only be weakened in its influence, and degraded in its reputation, by any civil or ecclesiastical establishment.

Some who read the Author's *Fast Sermons* in 1793 and 1794, and his *Farewell Discourse*, and compare his apprehensions and the earlier forebodings of Dr. Hartley with the splendours which have dazzled Great Britain during the last twenty-five years, may perhaps indulge a smile over such melancholy anticipations. Those, however, who consult history, and mark what circumstances have too often preceded great political changes, will, probably, yield themselves to more sober thoughtfulness.

J. T. RUTT.

Clapton, March 22, 1820.

CONTENTS

OF THE FIFTEENTH VOLUME.

DISCOURSES

ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

INCLUDING SEVEARAL ON PARTICULAR OCCASIONS.

	Page
The Preface - - - - - - -	3
A Sermon preached before the Congregation of Protestant Dissenters, at Mill-Hill Chapel, in Leeds, May 16, 1773, on Occasion of Resigning the Pastoral Office among them	7
Preface - - - - - - - -	*ib.*
Dr. Priestley's Letter to the Congregation - - -	8
Reply of the Congregation - - - - -	10
Sermon - - - - - - - -	11
The Conclusion - - - - - - -	27
A Sermon preached December 31, 1780, at the New Meeting, in Birmingham, on undertaking the Pastoral Office in that Place - - - - - -	28
Preface - - - - - - - -	*ib.*
Letter from the Congregation - - - - -	31
Sermon - - - - - - - -	*ib.*
The proper Constitution of a Christian Church, considered in a Sermon preached at the New Meeting, in Birmingham, November 3, 1782; to which is prefixed, a Prefatory Discourse, relating to the present state of those who are called Rational Dissenters - - - - -	45
Prefatory Discourse - - - - - -	*ib.*
Sermon - - - - - - - -	57
The Importance and Extent of Free Inquiry in Matters of Religion; a Sermon preached before the Congregations of the Old and New Meeting of Protestant Dissenters at Birmingham, November 5, 1785 - - - - -	70
The Doctrine of Divine Influence on the Human Mind; considered in a Sermon preached at the Ordination of the Rev. Messrs. Thomas and John Jervis, in 1779 - -	82
Preface - - - - - - - -	*ib.*
Sermon - - - - - - - -	87

Page

Two Discourses. I. On Habitual Devotion. II. On the Duty of not Living to Ourselves. Both preached to Assemblies of Protestant Dissenting Ministers, and published at their request - - - - - - 100
Preface - - - - - - - *ib.*
A Discourse on Habitual Devotion - - - - 104
The Duty of not living to Ourselves - - - 121
Of the Danger of Bad Habits - - - - 146
The Duty of not being ashamed of the Gospel - - 157
Glorying in the Cross of Christ - - - - 164
Taking the Cross and following Christ - - - 172
The Evidence of Christianity from the Persecution of Christians - - - - - - - - 182

DISCOURSES

ON THE EVIDENCE OF REVEALED RELIGION.

DEDICATION - - - - - - - 193
PREFACE - - - - - - - - 195

Disc.

I. The Importance of Religion to enlarge the Mind of Man - - - - - - - 199
II. Revelation the only Remedy for Idolatry and Superstition - - - - - - - 208
III. Of the Miracles by which the Deliverance of the Israelites from their Bondage in Egypt was effected 220
IV. Of the Delivery of the Law from Mount Sinai, and other Miracles in the Wilderness - - - 230
V. Of miraculous Events in the Time of Joshua - - 238
VI. General Observations on the Evidence of the Divine Mission of Moses - - - - - - 251
VII. Of the Miraculous Events from the Time of Joshua to the Babylonish Captivity - - - - 264
VIII. Of the Prophecies concerning the Dispersion and Restoration of the Jews - - - - - 281
IX. Of the Miracles of Jesus - - - - - 300
X. Of the Miracles of the Apostles - - - - 312
XI. On the Resurrection of Jesus - - - - 325
XII. A View of Revealed Religion - - - - 348

SINGLE SERMONS.

A Sermon on the subject of the Slave-Trade, delivered to a Society of Protestant Dissenters, at the New Meeting in Birmingham, 1788 - - - - - - 363
Preface - - - - - - - - *ib.*

Page
Sermon - - - - - - - - 368
A Prayer - - - - - - - - 387
The conduct to be observed by Dissenters, in order to procure the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts. Recommended in a Sermon preached before the Congregations of the Old and New Meetings at Birmingham, November 5, 1789 - - - - - 389
Reflections on Death, a Sermon, on occasion of the death of the Rev. Robert Robinson, of Cambridge, delivered at the New Meeting, in Birmingham, June 13, 1790 - - 404
Preface - - - - - - - - *ib.*
Sermon - - - - - - - - 406
The Proper Objects of Education in the present State of the World, represented in a Discourse delivered, on Wednesday April 27, 1791, at the Meeting-House in the Old Jewry, London, to the Supporters of the New College at Hackney - - - - - - - 420
A Discourse on the death of Dr. Price, delivered at Hackney, on Sunday May 1, 1791 - - - - - - 441
A particular attention to the Instruction of the Young recommended, in a Discourse delivered at the Gravel-Pit Meeting in Hackney, Dec. 4, 1791, on entering on the Office of Pastor to the Congregation of Protestant Dissenters assembling in that place - - - - - 458
Preface - - - - - - - - *ib.*
Discourse - - - - - - - - 462
The Duty of Forgiveness of Injuries: a Discourse intended to be delivered soon after the Riots in Birmingham - 475
Preface - - - - - - - - *ib.*
Discourse - - - - - - - - 477
A Sermon delivered at the Gravel-Pit Meeting, in Hackney, April 10, 1793, being the day appointed for a General Fast - - - - - - - - 494
Preface - - - - - - - - *ib.*
Dr. Priestley's Letter to the Editor of the Morning Chronicle 499
Fast Sermon - - - - - - - 501
The Present State of Europe compared with Ancient Prophecies; a Sermon preached at the Gravel-Pit Meeting, in Hackney, February 28, 1794, being the day appointed for a General Fast: with a Preface, containing the Reasons for the Author's leaving England - - - 519
Preface - - - - - - - - *ib.*
Fast Sermon - - - - - - - 532
The Use of Christianity, especially in Difficult Times. A Sermon, delivered at the Gravel-Pit Meeting, in Hackney, March 30, 1794, being the Author's Farewell Address to his Congregation - - - - - - - 552
Preface - - - - - - - - *ib.*
Sermon - - - - - - - - 553

APPENDIX.

No.		Page
I.	Passages from Deuteronomy, on the Evidence of the Divine Mission of Moses - - - -	571
II.	Passages from Hartley's Observations - - -	575
	Extract of a Sermon preached in the Chapel of Trinity College, Cambridge, December 19, 1793 - -	578
III.	Dr. Priestley's Letter to the Congregation of Protestant Dissenters, at the Gravel-Pit Meeting in Hackney,	581
	The Answer of the Congregation - - -	582
	The Address of the Young Men and Women, who attend the Lectures on the Subject of Natural and Religion - - - - - -	583

DISCOURSES

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

INCLUDING SEVERAL

On Particular Occasions.

Whom (that is, Christ) we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man, in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

Col. i. 28.

[*Birmingham*, 1787.]

DISCOURSES

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

INCLUDING SERMONS.

On Particular Occasions.

PREFACE.

THE greater part of the following Discourses have been published separately, having been composed for *particular occasions;* but several of them being now out of print, and others nearly so, I have thought proper to reprint them all, and to add a few others, in order to complete a volume.* These are such as I have been frequently desired to publish, as the sentiments they contain are not commonly insisted upon. Some of them, though not adapted to every capacity, are in the highest degree *practical;* they illustrate some parts of Dr. Hartley's excellent Theory of the human Affections;† and will, I hope, approve themselves to those who accustom themselves to take no superficial views of human nature and human life.

It is possible that, if my life be spared, I may, some time hence, publish a volume of plainer Discourses, adapted to readers of the lowest capacity, (for such are most of all wanted,) but at present I have not been able to please myself with the selection. Though I think it my duty to give my hearers the clearest views that I have been able to get for myself of the *Doctrines* of Christianity, especially such of them as have suffered the most by those corruptions and abuses to which it has pleased Divine Providence that the religion of his Son should have been subject, they will bear witness for me that I always represent every thing of a speculative nature as subservient to practice, and, indeed, of little or no use in any other view.

But, in order to make Christianity of use to the sensible part of mankind, as well as to recommend it to *Unbelievers*,

* The Discourses that have not been printed before, begin with that *On the Danger of Bad Habits.*

As the Discourses which are here reprinted, will not be printed again *separately*, the original *Prefaces*, and every thing annexed to them, are given with them. For this reason, the *Reflections on the Subject of Free Inquiry* are subjoined to the *Sermon on the 5th of November.* The other pieces annexed to that Sermon, relating to the doctrine of the *Trinity*, will be reprinted, if I should ever collect and republish all the tracts relating to my controversy on that subject, which I probably shall do when the whole is completed. *(P.)* See *Appendix.*

† *Prop.* 89. Priestley's *Hartley*, Ed. 2, 1790, pp. 202—207.

Mahometans and *Jews*, it must be exhibited in such a light as to be at least *credible;* and also the more *rational* and *amiable* it can be represented, consistently with truth, the more probable it is that it will be cordially embraced, and its moral precepts complied with. Speculative and practical considerations ought, therefore, to go hand in hand, since they have intimate connexions with each other, and cannot be separated without injury to both, especially the latter.

The great object of all the doctrines of Christianity is, to lead us to consider ourselves as the subjects of the moral government of God, a being of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, hating iniquity, but placable to the truly penitent, who has formed man for a state of immortality after death; and who has fully apprized us of these particulars, so unspeakably interesting to us, by men who proved their divine mission by such works as God only could perform. In all this there is nothing shocking to the reason of any man; and the consideration of these important truths cannot but make a favourable impression on our hearts, and inspire the worthiest resolutions. They lead us to *love God above all*, and *our fellow-creatures as ourselves*, as standing in the same relation to our common God and Father, the care of the same indulgent Providence, and heirs together of the same hope of eternal life, revealed to us in the gospel. By giving us a prospect of a future and better state, and teaching us to conceive of ourselves as destined to a higher sphere of action, to which the various scenes of this life are preparatory, they enable us to raise our hearts above the world, and all the gratifications and pursuits of it, and they animate us to acquit ourselves in the best manner we possibly can here, in order to qualify us for something greater and happier hereafter.

A due attention to the nature and circumstances of this life, as it respects another, cannot fail to inspire a temper of *habitual devotion*, and lead us to regard obedience to the will of God as the great and joyful business of our lives, and every thing else respecting our condition here as a matter of comparative indifference. To conduct ourselves with propriety, in whatever situation it shall please Divine Providence to place us, we shall consider as being our principal concern, as that which alone can make us truly happy while we live, and give us hope in the hour of death.

The great design of the following Discourses, though some of them relate to matters of speculation, is to inculcate such practical principles as these. If any other speculative prin-

ciples will inculcate them more effectually, I shall readily give them the preference to my own. But I am not more satisfied that the doctrines for which I have contended in my controversial writings, are most consonant to *truth*, and the genuine *sense of Scripture*, than I am that they have superior power to ennoble the minds, to mend the hearts, and reform the lives of men, which we must all acknowledge to be the great object and end of religion, and especially of the mission of Christ, who was sent *to bless men in turning them from their iniquities*, and *to purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works*.

While I am continued in the capacity of a public teacher of Christianity, (which I deem to be the most truly honourable of any character, office, or employment, in this world,) I shall endeavour to make my hearers both to understand and value their religion, and also to exemplify it by a suitable conduct in life. Let others think and speak as they please of my zeal for particular opinions, the only test of true discipleship to Jesus, which I inculcate upon the Christian Society that I serve, is that which our Lord himself has given, *By their fruits ye shall know them*; and I am willing to hope that, if tried by this test, we shall not be found to be singularly defective. Faults we all have. It is the part of humility to acknowledge them in ourselves, and to make allowance for them in others; and in this respect I only desire the same candid treatment from others that all others shall have from me. I shall even be well content with much less.

The greatest ambition of Christian ministers should be to render their respective churches examples to others, in regularity of discipline, and in the most effectual modes of instruction, adapted to every age, and especially to persons in younger life, in which, one of these Discourses will shew that instruction will have infinitely more effect than in any other. In the *Introduction* to my *Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion*,* I have laid down what I thought the best method of accomplishing one of these great ends, in Christian societies. Since that was written, I have improved my methods, and shall perhaps take some opportunity of explaining them more at large. Let others give due attention to the same important subject, and by comparing different experiments, and the results of them, we may hope, in time, to perfect

* First published *separately* in 1771. See Vol. II. pp. xxii—xxxii.

ourselves in this most important *art*, viz. that of *religious instruction*.

Much practice (which I can assure my younger friends in the Christian Ministry, makes the business continually more pleasing to myself, as well as more useful to those under my care) has led me, as I have observed, to enlarge and improve the plan I have referred to. But I shall here only mention an article to which I had not given much attention when I wrote the Essay above-mentioned. It is the *expounding of the Scriptures* in the usual course of reading them in public worship. Besides the immediate object of this mode of instruction, viz. enabling our readers to distinguish the true sense of the Scriptures, and to relish them in their own private reading, it affords the minister an opportunity of giving them much useful information of various kinds, and especially illustrating the evidences of revelation, such as might never occur in the course of regular sermons.

I have now, in the space of about six years, gone through all the books of the *New Testament*; and when I shall have gone over the same ground a second time, I shall probably publish the *Notes* I have drawn up for this purpose, for the use of Unitarian Societies of Laymen, and also of private persons and families.* But in the mean time, I wish to recommend the same method to other ministers, as an exercise in which they will find more satisfaction and advantage than they may be aware of. It is, indeed, no *new* thing; but, like *catechising*, and other good customs, in consequence of having been improperly conducted, it has unhappily grown into disuse.†

Besides earnestly contending for the *true* faith of the gospel, let us all *consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works*.

* See *Preface* to *Notes*, Vol. XI. pp. 5—7.

† See this *disuse* accounted for, *infra*, in the *Discourse* on "The Religious Instruction of Young Persons."

A

SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE THE

Congregation of Protestant Dissenters,

AT

MILL-HILL CHAPEL, LEEDS,

MAY 16, 1773,

On Occasion of resigning the Pastoral Office amongst them.

[First published in 1773.]

PREFACE.

HAVING been induced to publish the following discourse, by the request of the society to whom it was addressed, and to whom I owe the happiness of some years of my life, I have thought proper to prefix to it a copy of my *letter of resignation*, and of the answer to it, though, when they were written, there was far from being any design of making this use of them. This, however, I have done, because I presumed that they would be equally agreeable to the congregation with the Sermon itself, as *a memorial of our past intercourse, and mutual esteem*; and also because, if the Sermon be calculated to have any good effect, with respect to other ministers or congregations, these pieces must have the same tendency; shewing, more especially, what liberties a candid and generous-minded people, who are satisfied of the good intention of their minister, will bear from him, and receive with thankfulness. I own that I had also a farther view, viz. to give a more just idea than the Sermon alone could give, of the terms on which I have lived with the congregation at Leeds; which, to serve the base purposes of a party, has been grossly misrepresented, as the account of it has been industriously propagated.

The reason why the letter of resignation contains more

than a simple notice of my intention, was, that I then had no design of making any other address to the people upon the occasion; and though, by this means, some of the sentiments came to be repeated in the subsequent discourse, they appear to me to be of so much importance, as to bear that repetition.

I call my situation at Leeds a happy one. It has been so on several accounts; but what I have chiefly valued it for, is, that, without the most distant apprehension of giving offence to a very great majority of the congregation, I have been at full liberty to *speak*, *write*, or *do*, whatever I have judged that the interests of that particular society, or of Christianity in general, required. I do not know many congregations of Dissenters in England, so numerous as that of Leeds, where I could have been so happy in this respect; and it is a species of happiness, without which, I should have had little enjoyment of any situation, how advantageous soever it had been on other accounts.

I shall take the opportunity of this Preface, to recommend to the serious consideration, both of the society at Mill-hill, and of all persons into whose hands this discourse of mine may fall, that excellent sermon of Mr. Graham's,* intitled, *Repentance the only Condition of Final Acceptance*, (which was also preached at Mill-hill chapel,) as having the same general tendency with this Sermon, and also his *Letters on the Doctrine of Atonement*. In these pieces, the reader will find, what I think to be a fair and undisguised account of what is most essential in the religion of the gospel, expressed with a plainness and energy almost peculiar to the author.

To the Congregation of Protestant Dissenters, at Mill-hill, Leeds.

My Christian Brethren,

A LIVELY sense of the happiness I have enjoyed, during the continuance of my relation to you, as your pastor, makes it truly painful to me to inform you, that this agreeable relation must soon cease, and that I now give you notice to provide yourself with a successor to me.

My reason for this step is by no means any sort of dissatisfaction with respect to you. On the contrary, there is no situation in life of which I shall ever expect to have more

* Of Halifax. See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 11; Vol. III. p. 199.

real enjoyment, or which I shall consider as more truly reputable to me. Other prospects, however, have opened to me, by pursuing which, I flatter myself, that it will be in my power to be more useful both to my family, and the world.

Painful as my separation from you will be, I hope I shall have the satisfaction to leave upon your minds a testimony to the fidelity with which I have acted as your servant, and the servant of our common Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. The purity of his gospel, as far as God has enabled me to understand it myself, I have, without *fear*, but I hope, also, without any great or hurtful *imprudence*, endeavoured to explain to you; free, I trust, in a great measure, from that impure mixture of the doctrines and traditions of men, which, in the past ages of darkness and ignorance, had greatly debased its spirit, and obstructed its effect, and to which the providence of God seems to be now, in a more especial manner, opening the eyes of the Christian world; in order, we may hope, to its recovering its original lustre, and thereby recommending itself to the universal acceptance of Jews and Gentiles.

With respect to this object, I have only followed the steps of some of my worthy predecessors; and it will be your true glory, and my happiness, that you make choice of a successor to me, who will carry on this great and necessary work.

As much, however, as I have had this important work at heart, I have been careful to keep the pulpit almost entirely sacred to the still more important business of inculcating just maxims of conduct, and recommending a life and conversation becoming the purity of the gospel. If I or you have failed in this great point, to which all truth is but subservient, it will be my grief, and your aggravated blame; and better had it been for you to have been *Papists*, or *Pagans*, than even luke-warm, and much more, than profligate professors of genuine Christianity.

I undertook the charge of this congregation after having been several years engaged in a very different employment, under many disadvantages, and with great diffidence, and I am sensible of various imperfections with which the performance of my ministerial duty has been attended; but your candour, I have reason to think, has been such as to think that not ill done, which was well intended. Also, notwithstanding some of the schemes which I have formed, and endeavoured to carry into execution, have not been attended with all the success that I or you could have

wished, I flatter myself that my services and behaviour have, upon the whole, been such, as have produced some good effect, both in making the religion we profess appear more intelligible and amiable, and in enforcing a life and conversation suitable to it.

In this case, even the recollection of our past intercourse will always contribute to answer the same great end: and then, though our relation as *pastor* and *people* shall cease, that of *fellow-christians* will never be dissolved; and we may be looking forward to that more intimate and lasting union which shall take place hereafter, and which shall for ever subsist among the upright and good; when all other relations, and all other things, will appear to be, what they really are, in comparison with this, transitory and insignificant.

With my sincere prayers that the wise providence of God may direct your choice of my successor, and establish you in every thing that is good and exemplary, I am, with increased affection,

My Christian Brethren,
Your servant,
In the Gospel of Jesus Christ,
JOSEPH PRIESTLEY.

Leeds, Dec. 20, 1772.

The Congregation of Protestant Dissenters, at Mill-hill, to their Pastor, the Rev. Dr. Priestley.

Rev. Sir,

YOUR letter, advising your intention of a resignation of your pastoral charge over us, to take place in a short time, has been communicated, and openly read.

We have been too intimately, and too happily connected with you, to receive such a notice with indifference. We know too well your genuine worth and real merit, to be insensible of the great loss we may sustain by such a change in our congregational and individual connexions with you. But at the same time, our sincere friendship for you, disposes us to rejoice with you in any change that may materially affect the interest of yourself and family, for whose mutual welfare our good wishes will always accompany you.

We should think ourselves wanting to our own feelings, as well as to your deserts, if, on this occasion, and in this

public congregational manner, we did not acknowledge to you the very grateful sentiments we feel for all your sincere and faithful services to us as a people; and particularly, as *parents*, to bless you for those affectionate and earnest endeavours, which you have steadily pursued, in order to instil knowledge, and inculcate good principles on the minds of our children; and we are desirous to bear our testimony, that as we received you in harmony and peace, so has love and friendship mutually prevailed between us, and we trust will ever prevail.

That *the God of peace* may attend and bless you, is the sincere prayer of your ever affectionate friends.

(Signed by order of the congregation)

Dear Sir,

Your most obedient Servant and well-wisher,

GEORGE OATES.

Leeds, Mill-hill, Dec. 27, 1772.

SERMON.

1 PETER, i. 13:

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

My Christian Brethren,

I DO not think that I can take my leave of you, with whom I have been very happily connected, either with more propriety, or satisfaction, than by recommending to your attention the passage which I have now read to you from the epistle of the apostle Peter; as it contains a general view of the obligations and hopes of Christians, which are necessarily the chief object of attention to every Christian minister, and to all Christian people.

It has been my duty, whether I have properly attended to it or not, to explain and confirm to you, and thereby frequently to remind you of, the great principles of Christian faith; and it has been your duty to bear the word of exhortation, to give proper attention to the subject, and, being convinced of the truth of Christianity, to apply yourselves diligently to the observance of its precepts, in expectation of its glorious rewards; or, in the language of my text, (as it may be more properly rendered, or paraphrased,) *to gird up the loins of your mind, and, being vigilant, to entertain*

the most undoubting assurance of the happiness which awaits you at the coming of Jesus Christ.

Such, my brethren, is the importance of religion (being, in fact, the great business of human life) and such the fascination of the cares of this world, that it behoves us to be continually upon our guard, lest the scenes through which we must necessarily pass, draw off our attention from things of infinitely more moment, though more distant; and thus the great end and purpose of our being be sacrificed to what is merely accidental or instrumental to it.

It is our consolation, however, that almost all our difficulties in the conduct of life, as it respects futurity, have no other source than want of *attention of mind* to the subject. For, so absolutely inconsiderable are the things of this life, in comparison with that which is to succeed it, that even an imperfect apprehension of the nature of our situation (if, in consequence of being sufficiently impressed and attended to, it be allowed to have its proper influence on our minds) would be sufficient to keep us in the path of our duty. But without attention and consideration, no motives, however just and weighty, can have any effect.

In reality, men miscarry, and miss the great end of their being, only in consequence of acting *precipitately*, and without attending to the necessary consequences of their actions. In other words, it is when they act *irrationally*, like brute beasts, governed by mere appetite and passion. And when they act in this manner, is it to be wondered at, that they do not attain the proper happiness of rational and intelligent beings?

It is with great propriety, therefore, that *faith* is represented in the Scriptures as the great principle of the Christian life, that it was by faith, or in consequence of a firm belief in futurity, depending upon the promise of God, that all the worthies of the Old Testament were enabled to distinguish themselves as they did, and that it is still by faith that we Christians are to *overcome the world.*

Now this efficacious faith is not a single *act*, or *effort* of the mind, or a simple *conviction* that a future event will take place, (for then every man who, if he were interrogated, would answer that he was a Christian, would be a good man,) but it is such a *full persuasion* of mind, and such a *lively apprehension* of a distant event, as shall give it its just influence, the same that it would have near at hand; and this can only be acquired by frequent attention to it, and meditation upon it.

Could this great end be attained, were truly Christian principles and prospects sufficiently impressed on our minds, it would be impossible for us to be guilty of any base or criminal action; and the great motives to the love of God, and of our fellow-creatures, not being counteracted by any foreign influence, but having their natural and uncontrouled effect upon the mind, we should *love the Lord our God with all our hearts, and our neighbour as ourselves.* And when those governing principles had taken deep root in our minds, they would lead to the practice of the whole of our duty; and, our hearts and affections being engaged, every thing right and good would be easy and pleasant to us.

If these maxims be true, a great deal must be *done* by a man, before he can be a Christian in the proper sense of the word, that is, *not in name and profession only, but in deed and in truth*; because a *habit* and *temper* is to be formed, which can only be produced by the long continuance of proper actions. A truly Christian character is not to be formed but by a course of *discipline* and *exercise*, calculated to keep the mind continually impressed with a lively sense of the great truths of Christianity; so as to overpower the influence of the objects which surround us, and which are continually soliciting our attention.

If there be any one error in religion more dangerous in its tendency than others, it is the opinion which, in some form or other (and it is capable of endless modifications) has existed almost from the commencement of Christianity, viz. that religion properly so called, or that which renders a man acceptable in the sight of God, and fits him for heaven, is not a *habit* or *disposition of mind*, such as I have now mentioned, which evidently requires *time* and *care* to form; but some single *act*, or *effort*, whether proceeding from a man's self, or from God.

If this be the case, the whole may commence and terminate in the shortest space of time, and it may as well take place at the last hour of life, as at any other. Consequently, in the prospect of this, men may continue to live in sin, secretly flattering themselves with the hope of a late but effectual repentance. But if repentance consist of *a change of disposition and conduct*, it is not even possible that a late, or what we call *a death-bed repentance*, can be an effectual one. For true repentance can only take place in consequence of just views of things, sufficiently impressed upon the mind by careful reflection; and since it is not a *momentary operation*, but a *fixed character* that is wanted,

it is, in reality, but very little that can be done at any one particular time.

A man, for instance, may at any time resolve to change his conduct, but that does not amount to an actual change. He may perform any single action; but a single action, though it may *lead to*, does not *constitute* a habit; and even a habit, or course of actions, must be continued a considerable time before it can be quite easy and familiar to him, so that his heart and affections shall be engaged in it; and then only is the *character* properly formed. Again, this character, arising from a fixed attachment of mind to our duty, admits of *degrees;* for it may be a very weak or a very strong attachment; and our future reward will be in proportion to the strength and confirmed state of all our good habits and dispositions: for, as great as is the diversity of human characters in this life, it is probable that the justice and wisdom of God will provide as great a diversity in their future retribution.

Besides, the opinion that the great business of religion is the work of a moment, unavoidably subjects men to the grossest and most fatal delusions. Indeed, how can it be otherwise, when the thing to be attained passes wholly within a man's own breast, and is generally spoken of as a thing that is incapable of verbal description; the consequence of which must be, that persons of a warm imagination will presume, on any insignificant emotion, that they have experienced this happy change, and, valuing themselves upon it, will be apt to condemn and despise the rest of the world; while persons of a timid disposition will be tormented with doubts and despair. Not being content to judge of their hearts by their lives, they will be perpetually seeking for something that no man in his sober senses ever imagined he had found.

All the represenations which are given by our Saviour of the effect of the gospel, either in the hearts of individuals, or in the world at large, (which correspond to one another,) give us the idea of something that has a *gradual progress*, and no where of a sudden *instantaneous effect*. Thus we find it compared to *seed sown in the ground*, to a small quantity of *leaven*, to labouring in a *vineyard*, &c., all of which require a considerable time before a sensible effect is produced.

The doctrines of the gospel, though established by miracles, did not produce their effect on the minds of men by a *miraculous*, but by a *natural* power. Indeed, external miracles

would have been superfluous upon this scheme; since God, by internal miracles only, might have converted the whole world. The gospel had that effect, and that only, which the ground on which it was sown admitted. The new views which it opened to mankind induced most of those who were convinced that it was of God, to come to a resolution to change their former conduct; but neither could their mere belief of Christianity, nor their consequent resolution, actually profit them, till it had time to bring forth the proper fruits of it, viz. *good works*, and a *change of character*. And when men did thus become Christians, still the apostles never ceased urging them, not only to act up to their profession, but to go on to perfection, comparing the Christian course to a *race*, or other exercise, which required the greatest and most unremitted exertion of all their powers.

If I be asked How this end is to be attained, or, in the language of the apostle, how we must *gird up the loins of our minds*, by what means is this lively and efficacious faith in the great practical principles of religion to be acquired? I answer, with Paul, that *faith comes by hearing*; supposing the consequence of hearing to be *believing*, and that believing operates as it ought to do: for it naturally arises from giving sufficient attention of mind to the evidence on which our faith rests, and from frequent meditation on the objects of our faith; and it cannot be produced by any other means.

A man, therefore, who means to be a Christian, in earnest, must, in a more especial manner, make himself acquainted with the books of *Scripture*, and meditate upon their contents; because these books, and these books alone, contain the proper materials for this excellent and necessary *discipline of the mind*, viz. a genuine view of the principles of Christian faith, hope and practice.

It is in these books only that we have an authentic account of the several dispensations of God to mankind. Here we have the original instructions of men sent of God, that is, of God himself, respecting our conduct here, and our expectations hereafter. Here we meet with a distinct account of the lives of the prophets, and especially of the great prophet of God, Jesus Christ, by whose miracles, death and resurrection, all the promises of God are confirmed to us. In these books also we see, and are thereby made to *participate* of, the genuine effects of religious principles on the hearts of men, in the piety and benevolence with which the sacred writers were apparently actuated; so

that we enter into their excellent sentiments, as well as view their exemplary lives.

If, my brethren, we would consult our real improvement and happiness, as Christians, we must be sensible that we cannot be too minutely acquainted with such particulars as these, or meditate too much upon them. No other exercise can be efficacious to form the heart and guide the life. We therefore find the greatest stress laid upon this employment in the books of Scripture. Moses strongly inculates it upon the Jews, *Deut.* vi. 6: "These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up," &c. The Psalmist repeatedly expresses the satisfaction which he had in his meditation upon the word of God, *Psalm* i. 1, 2: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night." See, also, *Psalm* xix. 7, &c. and cxix. 97. The apostle *Paul* likewise says of *Timothy*, (2 *Tim.* iii. 15 – 17,) "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture, *given by inspiration of God, is profitable*, for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

These injunctions and exhortations certainly authorize us to conclude, that the frequent reading of the Scriptures, the taking pleasure in them, and meditation upon their contents, are absolutely necessary in order to *gird up the loins of our minds*, and to form a truly Christian character and conduct. The Scriptures will not be neglected by any person, but in consequence of his not apprehending himself to be sufficiently interested in their contents; and without this apprehension it is impossible that truly religious principles can be implanted, and take root in the mind. Without this aid the temptations of the world will be too strong for a man. He will not be sufficiently upon his guard, so as to have the perfect command of himself, and not be surprised into improper sentiments and unworthy actions.

I mention a constant attention to the Scriptures not as the only means of girding up the loins of our minds, and strength-

ening religious principles, but as that which is of eminent use to recommend and enforce the rest, such as prayer, an attendance upon public worship and other means of religion. All these things have a natural connexion, and they introduce and assist one another.

It may be said, that these things being only the *means* of religion, so much stress should not be laid upon them. But I would observe, that they are the *evidences*, as well as the means, of genuine religion; and also that no *end* can be gained without the use of the proper means. Besides, my immediate object at present is to insist chiefly upon those things which seem to be the most neglected, whatever be their relative importance; and if it was the error of the last age to lay too much stress upon the means of religion, it is evidently the error of many in the present age, at least such as you whom I am now addressing, to pay too little attention to them; and if the former error produced a spurious kind of religion, the tendency of our present sentiments and conduct is to leave us no religion at all.

Having given this account of the importance of attending to the means of religion in general, and to the study of the Scriptures in particular, as being of the most eminent use to generate and strengthen the great principle of Christian faith, which is the foundation of all religion, I shall add a few observations concerning two other outward means of Christian improvement, and which are also marks of our attention to the profession of Christianity, viz. *public worship*, and *the Lord's Supper*, the neglect of which is not the fault of this congregation in particular, (though this is the only reason why I choose to speak of them at all on this occasion,) but of the present age in general.

I shall say nothing of the design, or use, either of public worship, or of the Lord's Supper, because you will agree with me in your ideas of them; but, my brethren, I wish to make you more sensible of the obligation you are under, to act agreeably to your own convictions.

If one day in seven be appointed to be a season of rest from labour, and for serious recollection of mind, by that Being who has made us capable both of labour and of reflection, let us conscientiously appropriate this, as well as every other portion of our time, to the use for which it was intended, and for which, we may therefore presume, it is really wanted; and let us not, out of too great a dread of superstition, (which ought certainly to be guarded against, in this as well as in every thing else,) pass into the contrary

extreme, of a gross abuse of a divine ordinance, and a scandalous licentiousness of conduct.

Works of *necessity* and *mercy* are allowed to be a sufficient reason for setting aside the distinction of the Lord's day from the rest; but that journey, for instance, cannot be said to be *necessary*, for which nothing but *convenience* can be pleaded; neither can it be necessary to confine yourselves at home by taking a medicine on that day, when your health would not suffer by its being taken on the day before, or the day after. Also a cold, or other slight indisposition, is with a very ill grace pleaded as an excuse for absence from public worship, by those who are known to run much greater risks on other accounts. I wish it were merely a matter of *doubt*, whether, in many cases, the plea of necessity be justly alleged, and that it could be supposed that persons acted according to their *judgments*, though biassed by their inclinations. But, alas! so generally, and so manifestly, is business of a nature altogether foreign to the proper design of the Lord's day thrown into it, by many persons, that it cannot be accounted for but by supposing it to be the effect of particular *design* and *contrivance;* which, being a wilful neglect of an acknowledged duty, certainly argues a want of the fear of God, and the absence of *religious principle*, properly so called.

Again, you will agree with me, my brethren, that our Lord Jesus Christ expressly commanded his disciples to commemorate his death (which was the greatest proof of his love to us) by a cheerful, but at the same time a solemn and serious rite, and that this memorial is to continue in his church till his second coming. This rite, therefore, is, in fact, one of the *standing proofs* of the truth of Christianity; and consequently, by joining in it, we not only acknowledge that truth, but bear our *testimony* to it, and, like the apostles themselves, are both the *disciples*, and, in some measure, the *witnesses* of Christ, even to the end of time.

You are sensible that the command to join in the celebration of this institution extends to all who bear the Christian name, and who are qualified to join in any other part of Christian worship. To what then, my brethren, can your neglect of this ordinance be owing? It must be either some latent superstition, a criminal want of attention to the subject, or a more criminal indifference to the thing itself arising from a want of respect to the authority that enjoins it. I wish it were even possible to suggest any other reason for your conduct.

The moral uses of the very few positive institutions in the Christian religion, are sufficiently obvious; but admitting that they were not so, it ought to suffice us that they are enjoined by a *competent authority;* and the man who can knowingly transgress any one acknowledged command, though, to his apprehension, ever so unmeaning, is certainly destitute of respect to the *authority* by which it is enjoined, and of *a principle of obedience* in general, which, with respect to God, is, in the highest degree, criminal and dangerous. You do not yourselves always give to a servant, or a child, the reasons of your commands, and yet you justly expect implicit obedience; and you would consider their *peremptory disobedience* as deserving of the severest punishment, though the thing itself should be ever so trifling.

As I cannot take my leave of you, my brethren, without expressing my earnest wishes that the several schemes I have formed, and endeavoured to carry into execution, for your benefit, (and, at the same time, that of dissenting congregations in general,) may have their effect after my departure from you; and as a summary and connected view of them may possibly be of some use for that purpose, I shall, on this occasion, briefly remind you of them, and also inform you what I should have wished to have done farther, in pursuance of the same general design.

Perceiving, upon my first coming among you, that very few, in proportion to the number of the congregation, received *the Lord's Supper*, I published *A Free Address* to you upon the subject, calculated, as I thought, to explain the nature of that institution, to answer the objections you might have to the celebration of it, especially those which remained from the ignorance and superstition of the dark ages of Christianity, and to set the advantage and obligation of communicating in a clear and strong light. I have had the satisfaction to find that my endeavours, in this respect, have not been wholly without effect, though by no means so great as I wished, or indeed expected.

In this Address I gave my opinion very strongly, and I have repeated it upon several occasions since, against that service which is called the *preparation for the Lord's Supper*, as altogether unscriptural and superstitious; but I thought it, upon the whole, most expedient to content myself with those declarations; and I did not choose to give offence to any well-meaning persons by discontinuing that service. I meant, however, very soon to have made the proposal,

and should have been glad if you had cheerfully acceded to it.

Being sensible how much is incumbent upon *masters of families*, and how much is in their power, with respect to the care of their children and servants, in instructing them, attending to their morals, and keeping up the worship of God in their families, I published a plain and earnest *Address* to you on this subject also, together with short *Forms of Prayer*, for all the usual occasions of a family; and I took what care I could to have it put into the hands of every master of a family among you. Whether this attempt has had any good effect, is known to God and your own consciences.

Observing that, in consequence of the happy tranquillity which Dissenters have of late years enjoyed, but little attention has been given by them to the true principles of their dissent, which has necessarily been accompanied with a declension of just zeal for the interest, as the cause of religious liberty, I endeavoured to make the principles of our dissent better understood, and more especially to impress the minds of those who maintained them with a just sense of their importance and obligation, in *A Free Address to Protestant Dissenters as such.** But as this Address appeared to me to be less necessary in this congregation, and indeed in this part of the country, than in many other places, I took no particular care to make it known to you; and to avoid giving offence by the necessary freedom of it, I published it without my name.

The great profligacy of the present age being manifestly owing to a want of moral and religious principles, imbibed in early years, and it being impossible to inculcate these principles with sufficient force and effect by discourses from the pulpit, which are almost necessarily miscellaneous and unconnected, I formed, and have carried into execution, a pretty extensive plan of *Religious Instruction*, advancing, in a regular progress, from infancy to years of perfect manhood.

For this purpose I thought it convenient to divide the younger part of my hearers into three classes. The first consisted of *children*, for whose use I printed a short and very plain *Catechism*, containing such a view of the principles of religion as, I think, the youngest children that have attained to the use of speech, may be made to understand. The second consisted of young persons more advanced in

* "By a Dissenter," 1769. See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 97.

years, for whom I drew up another Catechism, consisting of a set of *questions* only, peculiarly calculated, as I think, to bring them very early, and pretty thoroughly acquainted with *the Scriptures*, the genuine source of all religious knowledge.

The third class consisted of *young men*, from the age of sixteen or eighteen, to about thirty, for whose use I composed a set of *Lectures*, which I delivered in the way of conversation, in which I endeavoured to demonstrate to them, in a regular manner, the principles of *natural religion*, the *evidences*, and the *doctrines of revelation*, and which I concluded with a view of *the corruptions of Christianity*, historically deduced.* By this means, I am satisfied, from the trial that I have now made of it, that young persons may most easily be brought to understand their religion as Christians, Protestants, and Dissenters.

The peculiar advantages of this mode of instruction, and a more distinct account of the nature of it, I explained in an *Essay on the best Method of communicating Religious Knowledge to the Members of Christian Societies*.† Part of this Course of Lectures I have already published, under the title of *Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion*, and I intend, God willing, to publish the remainder in due time.

In part, to avoid obvious inconveniences, and partly for want of a room sufficiently large for the purpose, I confined these lectures, for the first time of reading them, to *young men;* but I should have been glad if, at the second time of reading them, I could have contrived to instruct the *young women*, either at the same time or separately.

It is with great satisfaction that I can say, with respect to most of the young men of this congregation, that they have given due attendance on these lectures; and I flatter myself that, by the attention which they gave to them when they were delivered, and which, I hope, they will still continue to give to them when they are printed, they will find their time and pains not ill bestowed.

With respect to children of the first class, I must own that I had not all the encouragement that I wished, and still less with respect to the second; owing, perhaps, to the parents not sufficiently entering into the nature of a thing so new to them as this was; for I am unwilling to suppose that they were averse to taking the pains, which they must,

* Afterwards enlarged into the *History*. See Vol. V. p. 8.
† See Vol. II. pp. xxii—xxxii.

at least at the first, have necessarily done, to prepare their children for this kind of exercise.

It is acknowledged by all, that the general plan and *discipline* of our societies has deviated very far indeed from that of the primitive churches, which consisted of persons whose object it was to *watch over and edify one another*, and especially that a very unequal part of the burden is now thrown upon the minister; since he is generally so situated, that he cannot, with the least probability of success, interpose his advice or admonition where it may be most wanted. I therefore wrote and published an *Address* to you, and other Christian societies, upon that subject, proposing what appeared to me a better constitution of a Christian church, by means of which the original and proper ends of Christian societies might be more effectually answered.

I am afraid we are gone too far from the primitive institutions of Christianity to expect a revival of them in this age; but I hope that the idea I then endeavoured to give you of the obligation that naturally lies upon every member of a Christian society, who, on any account whatever, has influence in it (without any formal nomination to an office) to contribute all that may be in his power to the real benefit of it, by instruction, reproof, or any other way, will not be wholly without effect; and that you will, in general, be more attentive to the important Christian duty of *provoking to love and to good works, exhorting one another daily while it is called to-day, lest any be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.* [*Heb.* x. 24, iii. 13.]

Lastly, perceiving in this neighbourhood, and, in some measure, among yourselves, the progress of what appears to me to be a spurious and mischievous set of notions in religion, inspiring very unworthy ideas of the Divine Being, and the maxims of his government, which cannot but have an unfavourable effect upon the disposition of men's minds, and consequently upon their conduct in life, I published, in the cheapest form that I could, and, in order to give as little offence as possible, without my name, a serious *Appeal to the Professors of Christianity*, upon this subject.* This, and other small pieces, written in pursuance of the same design, I have had the satisfaction to find, have been the instrument, in the hands of Divine Providence, of enlightening the minds of many in the knowledge of what I believe

* 1770. See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 98; Vol. II. pp. 381—489.

to be *his truth*, and I hope they will still continue to produce the same effect.

I was the more willing to publish something of this kind, as it has always been my opinion, and my practice has been agreeable to it, to keep all subjects of religious controversy, as much as possible, out of the pulpit; and yet it was to be wished, that persons of plain understandings, who were disposed to read and inquire for themselves, might have an opportunity of seeing the foundation, in reason and the Scriptures, of those doctrines which alone can render the Divine Being the object of filial reverence, love, and confidence; and likewise be able to answer those who allege detached passages of Scripture, in favour of long-established corruptions, passages often ill translated, but more often wretchedly interpreted.

Allow me to say, without offence to any who may be otherwise minded, if any such should be present, that *speculative principles*, especially those which relate to the nature, character, and moral government of God, are by no means a matter of indifference with respect to *practice;* and, therefore, that great care ought to be taken to form just ideas of these subjects.

If the Divine Being be considered as capable of punishing men for a crime which they did not commit, of sentencing some to everlasting happiness, and others to everlasting misery, from mere arbitrary will; and of shewing no mercy to any of his offending, though truly penitent creatures, (whom, for wise ends, he made imperfect,) till a full satisfaction was made to his infinite justice, (even so far as to take it of the innocent, if the guilty were not able to pay,) which is, in fact, to have no proper principle of mercy or forgiveness at all, it is not in human nature to look up to him with reverence, love, or confidence.

Also the doctrine of the *Divine Unity* is a subject of practical, as well as of speculative consideration, and indeed for no other reason could so much stress be laid upon it in the books of the *Old* and *New Testament*, in which we are required *to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind.* This certainly requires that all our affections centre in one great object. But *three persons* are *three objects*, which will necessarily be considered in different lights, having different *attributes*, as well as different *names;* for the difference between *persons* and *beings* is merely verbal, and not real. It is even acknowledged that the difference is not comprehensible by us, and therefore,

with respect to us, and our sentiments and feelings, it must be the same as if there was no difference at all; and, consequently, the worship of three different persons must necessarily be the worship of three different gods.

But, my brethren, if these things be of a practical nature, see that you make a practical use of them, by giving sufficient attention to them, as I explained in the first part of this discourse, and let them have their natural influence upon your minds; and also see that you do not disgrace and discredict a rational faith by an unworthy conduct. Better had it been for you to have believed in three, or three hundred gods, and those of wood and stone, than to believe in the *one only living and true God*, and, at the same time, live as without him in the world, entirely thoughtless of his being, character, and government, as if you were not accountable to him for your conduct. Infinitely better were it for you to believe whatever the most stupid of mankind have believed concerning God, than disregard his laws, profane his name, or neglect his worship.

Better were it for you to have believed in a revengeful, implacable object of worship, than to believe in a God truly merciful and gracious, who freely, and *for his goodness' sake* only, forgives all the sincerely penitent, and has sent his Son to live and die, in order to bring men to repentance, and, at the same time, not to be solicitous to become the proper objects of his mercy, or not to imitate such an amiable pattern, and *be merciful, as your Father who is in heaven is merciful;* freely, and without any satisfaction, forgiving, as you yourselves hope to be forgiven. In short, better were it for you to believe all the absurdities of the Church of Rome, than not to add purity of heart and life to purity of doctrine and worship.

Gross ignorance and superstition still prevail among the generality of professing Christians, especially the unlearned; and it would be unreasonable to expect that opinions which have prevailed, and which have been held sacred by almost the whole Christian world, for many ages, (in which our excellent religion was suffered, by the unsearchable wisdom of God, to lie under a cloud,) should not retain their influence with some more *ingenuous minds*, and even that some degree of *learning* and *ability* should be employed in their defence. This is the case with respect to the grossest absurdities of Popery, which, it cannot be denied, have had, and probably still have, their defenders among the most learned and the best of mankind.

It is evident, however, and the friends of Christianity will rejoice in the prospect of it, that the truth is making its way by degrees, and in a manner that promises its general prevalence, viz. with men of real learning, and especially those men of letters who give most of their time to the study of the Scriptures; and also with other persons of good sense and good dispositions, who are capable of inquiring and thinking for themselves; and the number of these persons is increasing every day.

A very remarkable and happy change has, in the course of Divine Providence, been gradually brought about among yourselves in this respect, in the space of a century, which period of time is now elapsed since the erection of the building in which we are now assembled.* Indeed, the whole of the change has taken place in the memory of very many of you who are now present. I shall think myself happy if I have been, in any respect, the means, in the hands of God, of advancing this great work of reformation among you; but much more so, if, together with the principles of sound knowledge, I have, in any measure, successfully inculcated what is still more needful, that *integrity of heart and life*, that genuine love of God and of mankind, without which all knowledge is but as *sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.*

The times of our ancestors were times of laudable zeal, but of very limited knowledge. It were pity if an increase of knowledge should be attended with a decrease of zeal. You cannot be sufficiently thankful to God for bringing you *out of darkness into his marvellous light;* but see that you walk worthy of that light, and that you bring no disgrace upon rational Christianity by your unworthy conduct. In the present state of human nature, it cannot be expected but that such *offences* as these will come, but *woe unto them by whom they come.*

I trust, my brethren, that you do not need any exhortation to continue stedfast in your principles as *Dissenters*, and upon this subject I have nothing to add to what I have said in my *Address to Protestant Dissenters as such.* I shall only remind you at present, that to be a Dissenter, in the present state of things in this country, is to bear our testi-

* The first Minister was the celebrated Nonconformist *Christopher Nesse*, who "preached in private till 1672, when the main riding-house being converted to a meeting-house, he preached publicly there to a numerous auditory." Calamy's *Account*, p. 799; Palmer's *Noncon. Mem.* Ed. 2, III. p. 441. "*Mill Hill Chapel* is said to have been the first built in the North of England after the general indulgence in 1672." *Hist. of Leeds*, 18mo. 1797, p. 4. See Vol. X. p. 413.

mony against the authority and imposition of men in matters of religion, and also against the many abuses and corruptions in Christian doctrine, discipline, and worship, which had their source in the antichristian church of Rome, and which yet remain in our established church.

A cause like this wants not the countenance of *numbers*, or of *wealth*, to make it respectable. It is true, my brethren, our profession excludes us from many of the honours and emoluments of this world, and even subjects us to many grievous pains and penalties, whenever the malice of our enemies shall break through the restraints of humanity and natural justice, by taking advantage of several *laws*, which are as disgraceful to our country and free constitution, as they are injurious to us. But I trust that, considering the nature of our profession, and our expectations as *Christians*, we shall not be surprised or discouraged by this circumstance, as if some *strange* and extraordinary *thing had happened to us;* when our Master himself, *not being of the world*, was *hated by the world*, and his religion was, from the very beginning, *a sect that was every where spoken against.*

In fact, what you and I, my brethren, call genuine Christianity, has hardly ever been so much as tolerated by the laws of any Christian country, at least in Europe, and what is called Christendom. I trust, however, from a view of the present face of things, compared with the writings of the prophets, (which were certainly intended to apprize us of very important events respecting the Christian church,) that the time is fast approaching, when an end will be put to all antichristian tyranny, and when "the kingdoms of the world *will* become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." [*Rev.* xi. 15.]

All who are interested in the support of these *antichristian establishments*, which usurp an undue authority over the consciences of men, and whose wealth and power are advanced by them, are at this very time in a state of general consternation, both at home and abroad; seeing their principles and maxims universally decried, and their unjust claims assailed from a great variety of quarters, so that *their kingdom* is now "full of darkness, and they *are gnawing* their tongues for pain," (*Rev.* xvi. 10,) but *without repenting of their deeds.* And we are authorized, my brethren, by the Spirit which foretold both this corruption of Christianity, and the restoration of it from this deplorably corrupted state, to enjoy their confusion and distress; and,

together with the powers of *heaven, and the holy apostles and prophets*, to rejoice at the fall of this *mystical Babylon*, since it is *God that avengeth us of her.* (*Rev.* xviii. 20.)

But *who shall abide this day of our Lord's coming*, to plead his cause in the world, when those princes and states which *would not have him to reign over them*, and who have persecuted and oppressed his faithful witnesses, shall be *broken in pieces like a potter's vessel.*

THE CONCLUSION.

I think myself happy, my brethren, and I shall reflect upon it with pleasure as long as I am capable of reflection, that, as our connexion has subsisted with perfect harmony, it is dissolved with mutual gratitude and esteem. I am conscious, indeed, of many imperfections, and of some neglects in the discharge of my duty, but you have had the candour to overlook them. I would observe, however, that it is not by the opinion which we may entertain of each other that we must stand or fall, at the tribunal of *the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls*, Christ Jesus. He, being endued by God with a perfect knowledge of our characters, (though, having a fellow-feeling of our infirmities, he will be disposed to make all reasonable allowances for us,) may acquit where we condemn, and condemn where we acquit. To this decisive judgment, let us have respect. Happy will it be for us if I have so preached, and you so heard, that we need *not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

It is another ground of satisfaction to me, that I leave the congregation in so good a state, in a variety of respects, especially so harmonious in your general sentiments and views, on which account you cannot fail to appear highly respectable wherever the Dissenting interest is known; and you have given a very important proof of your prudence and judgment, as well as of your harmony, in the perfect unanimity with which you have acted in the choice of my successor;* a choice in which I sincerely concur, and on which I congratulate you. May you continue to be a pattern to other congregations, in this and in every thing else in which a Christian society can be worthy of imitation, and may you reap the proper and happy fruits of what has been so truly praiseworthy in your dispositions and conduct.

* Rev. W. Wood, F. L. S. who died in 1808. See Wellbeloved's *Memoirs*, 1809, pp. 15—18.

" And now, brethren," in the words of the apostle *Paul*, " I commend you to God, and the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them who are sanctified." (*Acts* xx. 32.) " To Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen!" [*Jude* 24, 25.]

A

SERMON,

PREACHED DECEMBER 31, 1780,

AT

THE NEW MEETING, IN BIRMINGHAM,

ON

Undertaking the Pastoral Office in that Place.

[First published in 1781.]

PREFACE.

THE request that has been made to me to publish this Sermon has been such, that it is with great pleasure that I comply with it. But my principal motive is, to exhibit what, I hope, will not long be so remarkable a thing as it is at present in this country, viz. the concurrence of a numerous and respectable society of Christians, in the proper Unitarian principles; thinking, for the reasons mentioned in the Sermon itself, that it cannot be too generally known that there are Christian societies who hold these principles.

Those who are acquainted with the state of the Dissenters, will be satisfied that, notwithstanding the great advances that have been made of late years in just and liberal sentiments, there are few societies among them who would even bear such an Address as that which is now before the public. But the Congregation of the New Meeting, at Birmingham, have had uncommon advantages, in the instructions of the late excellent Mr. Bourn, those of

my worthy colleague, and of the Reverend Mr. Hawkes, whom I have the honour to succeed.* The same simplicity, and the same fearless integrity in the cause of truth, would, I doubt not, be every where, in due time, crowned with the same success. And, certainly, this is a cause which well deserves that we should be willing to run some risk for. In promoting genuine Christianity, it must be expected by us, that we exert not only *fortitude*, but likewise *patience*, before we see the happy fruits of our labours.

I hope that my own example, as far as it is known, will operate to encourage some. There are few who have, of late years, suffered more from bigotry than myself. So extremely unpopular was I for some years after my first settlement as a minister, though I had never preached a controversial sermon, or done any thing that I thought could irritate, (and I do not know that I was charged with any thing in my conduct unbecoming a Christian, or a Christian minister,) that, besides losing the greatest part of my hearers, when I printed and circulated *Proposals for opening a School*, for which I was not thought to be unqualified, I never got a single scholar. I did not want friends to solicit for me; but to all that could be said in my favour, it was replied, "What! send my son to an Arian?" For such I then was, and did not conceal it.†

When I look back upon this trying situation, I consider myself more indebted to it, on several accounts, than to any other of the scenes through which it has pleased Divine Providence to lead me. And I hope I am equally thankful to that Being who disposes of all things, both for leading me into it, and bringing me out of it.

From so discouraging an outset, I thank God that, having persisted in my inquiries after truth, and in the most unreserved profession of whatever I have apprehended to be such, (notwithstanding, in the course of it, I have been led to maintain opinions the most offensive that were ever advanced among Christians,) I have been brought, though with very different views, within the call of a Christian society who are liberal enough to think me capable of serving them in the character of their pastor. Nor is this the only congregation where I have had reason to think my services would have been acceptable.

Even those opinions which occasioned so great an outcry

* See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 155, 156.

† This happened at *Needham*, about 1756. See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 41, 59.

at first, I can already perceive not to give such alarm at present; and I am persuaded that, in due time, they will not only wear a still less frightful aspect, but be generally received by Christians, and be valued by them as one of the greatest bulwarks of the Protestant cause, against the most fundamental corruptions of the true Christian system.

Having been favoured with so much more encouragement than I had reason to expect, (far more than most others who have trod the same unpromising path,) I hope I shall not, in a more advantageons situation, pursue any other course than that which I have hitherto held, and that I shall cheerfully exert my best endeavours in the service of the society I have the happiness to be connected with, and whose candour and indulgence I shall, on several accounts, have so much need of.

Notwithstanding the attention that I hope I shall always give to these superior duties, and to theological studies, I propose not to remit any of my application to philosophical pursuits, which also I entered upon under many disadvantages, and which I am now much better situated for prosecuting. These pursuits, different as they are, are far from being at variance. On the contrary, they perfectly harmonize with, and promote each other.

I shall subjoin a copy of *the request of the congregation* to print this Sermon, and shall add, that the reader will find some of the most important sentiments in this discourse, farther urged in the *Sermon on my Resignation of the Pastoral Office at Leeds*, but more largely in an excellent piece just published, entitled, "A free and serious Address to the Christian Laity, especially such as, embracing Unitarian Sentiments, conform to Trinitarian Worship."

The doctrine of *the proper object of religious worship* is of such importance, that it behoves all who are impressed with a just sense of it, to *cry aloud and not spare;* especially now that the attention of the Christian world is awake to it, and the opposition to the great doctrine of *the Divine Unity*, may be expected, from the evident agreeableness of it to reason and the Scriptures, to be more and more impotent. I rejoice to see so seasonable a publication as that above-mentioned, on the subject, and wish it may have all the effect it deserves.

I will also now inform the reader, that on this subject I addressed the public in an anonymous piece, entitled, "A Letter to a Layman on the Subject of Mr. Lindsey's Pro-

posal for a Reformed English Church,"* in the year 1774. Also a considerable part of my "Free Address to Protestant Dissenters, as such,"† relates to this subject.

Birmingham, 28th Jan. 1781.

Rev. and dear Sir,

We, subscribing members of the congregation of Protestant Dissenters, assembling at the New Meeting in Birmingham, being now met upon congregational affairs, are happy in embracing this opportunity of presenting you with our united thanks, for the honour you have done us in accepting our unanimous invitation to take, in connexion with the Rev. Mr. Blythe, the pastoral care of this church. Permit us also to thank you for the *Introductory Discourse* you delivered us, and to request its publication. As we heard it with much satisfaction and pleasure, so we cannot but wish to have it in our power more deliberately to review the important sentiments it inculcated, and also be the means of giving others an opportunity of profiting by them. Trusting to your candour, we make no difficulty in imparting these wishes to you, and with the most cordial respect we remain,

Rev. and dear Sir,

Your affectionate and very humble Servants,

Signed at the request and on the behalf of the Subscribers present, } WILLIAM RUSSELL.‡

SERMON.

John xvii. 16:

They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

My Christian Brethren,

In these words of our Saviour we have a view given us of the great object of the Christian religion, from which we may collect a general, but just idea, of the proper *end and use of Christian societies*, with *the duties of the several members of them;* and for this reason I wish to call your attention

* "On the plan of the late Dr. Samuel Clarke." See Vol. V. p. 85, *Note* ‡.

† See *supra*, pp. 20, 25.

‡ See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 148, 157, *ad fin.*; Vol. XI, pp. 3, 4.

to them, on my acceptance of your invitation to the pastoral officeamong you.

Our Lord answered with truth, when, in his reply to Pilate, he said, [*John* xvii. 36,] "My kingdom is not of this world." For the *power* exercised in his kingdom, is not over men's persons and property; the *honours* of it are not worldly honours and distinctions; and the advantages of it, to the prince or the subject, are not such as are sought for by earthly sovereigns and their adherents. So far are either from any pretensions to worldly power, wealth, pleasure, or even security, that, in consequence of *not being of the world*, but having a disposition of mind unsuited to it, and looking beyond it, they are the objects of hatred and persecution to men of mere worldly views, and who by divine permission, have the powers of this world at their command.

This was fully experienced by our Lord himself, who, when he was on earth, was "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," (*Isa.* liii. 3,) and who terminated a laborioús life with a painful and ignominious death upon the cross. His followers also, and generally in proportion to their being animated with the same spirit, and actuated by the same views (openly professing the truth of his gospel in its purity, and making light of what the world could do in opposition to it) have found the truth of what he himself apprized them, [*John* xiii. 16, xv. 20,] viz. that "The servant is not greater than his Lord," and that as *the world had hated him*, so it *would hate them also*. But then, as the apostle says, (2 *Tim.* ii. 12,) as they *suffered with him*, suffered in his cause, in the cause of truth and a good conscience, they will assuredly *reign with him, and be glorified together.*

If, then, we call ourselves Christians, we must ever bear in mind, that, though we live in the world, that is, with men who have no views or prospects beyond it, whose chief pursuits are riches, honours, or pleasures, these are but *secondary* things for us. We are to receive them thankfully, and above all, to improve them properly, if, in the course of Divine Providence, they fall to our lot; but we are, at the same time, to be always looking beyond them, to a *more enduring substance*, to a *treasure in heaven*, to *honours* that are unfading, which *come from God*, and not from man, and to that *pleasure* which is *at his right hand for evermore*, accompanied with that inward satisfaction of mind, which always attends the possession of a good conscience. And we

ought ever to be ready even to renounce all the advantages, honours, and pleasures of the world, when they come in competition with our duty, and our obedience to the commands of Christ. We must not hold *even life itself* so *dear to us*, as that we should not be ready to part with it (and, in whatever manner those who in this world have the power over life shall please) rather than *make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience*. If in the hour of trial we deny Christ, *he will also deny us*.

It is much easier to preserve these just views of the object and end of our profession in an openly hostile, than in a seemingly friendly world, from the constant opposition of principles and objects in the former circumstances. In this case, that is, in a state of persecution, whether we voluntarily attend to it or not, we cannot help seeing, and reflecting continually, that this world is not our home. While we preserve the profession of our faith uncorrupted, and while we retain our integrity in asserting that faith, without any of those unworthy artifices, whereby too many evade the consequences of a frank and open declaration of their real principles, we see there is no state of enjoyment or repose to be looked for here; and we therefore naturally, and indeed necessarily, look forward to *that rest which yet remaineth for the people of God*, (*Heb.* iv. 9,) where alone "The wicked cease from troubling." (*Job* iii. 17.) In this situation we want no motives to cultivate that temper and disposition of mind, which alone can qualify us for the happiness of that heavenly state.

But when the world is not *apparently* hostile to us, it is most of all *truly* so. For then it is, that, not being molested by the world, at the same time that we are subject to the influence of it, being *men of like passions with others*, the same things that strike others, strike us. By mixing with the world, and sharing the emoluments of it, we naturally become fond of them, and attached to them; and within certain limits this is unavoidable, and not amiss. But is it in human nature, without particular efforts with ourselves, to which the bulk of mankind are much averse, to keep within the bounds of moderation, and not to become too much attached to the world, and those things of it which are foreign to our main object and ultimate views? Living with the world, we naturally live as the world does, and become gradually, in all respects, like the world; and the great objects of our Christian profession, being too long

kept out of sight, lose their influence, and we are in danger of abandoning the pursuit of them altogether.

Now the use of Christian societies is to counteract the influence of the world around us, to keep up the idea of our being separate from the world, and of the importance of being on our guard against the infection of it. It is a provision for regular instruction in the doctrines of the gospel, and for meditation upon the nature and excellence of it, in order to *establish, strengthen, and settle us in our most holy faith*, (1 *Peter* v. 10,) and thus to prepare us for encountering the frowns or the smiles of the world around us.

In Christian assemblies, the Scriptures, which contain the history of all the dispensations of God to mankind, the pious sentiments of men devoted to God, and honoured by him, especially the history of our Saviour, his doctrines, miracles, and conversations, with the labours and writings of the apostles who succeeded him, (abounding with excellent instruction, and most animating examples of virtue and piety, adapted to every age and condition in life,) are constantly read and explained. It is in consequence of being in a habit of attending to these things, at least on one day in seven, and being led thereby to give more particular attention to them at our leisure hours, in our families, in our closets, and in the intervals of our daily occupations, that, amidst the business of this life (which must be attended to, having for its object our well-being here) those things which relate to our well-being hereafter, are not forgotten. Thus are we striving for the *bread that perishes*, and, at the same time, more earnestly still for "that which endureth to everlasting life." (*John* vi. 27.)

The very *forms* of Christian societies, when they are properly kept up, the very meeting of one another, not as common friends and acquaintance, but as *Christians*, and joining together in acts of Christian worship, hearing the same instructions, and professing the same faith, have great efficacy in promoting a Christian temper, and are a powerful motive to Christian conduct. All habits of society are restraints upon men; and as it is confessedly difficult to break the chains of bad company, so it would not be easy to a man to frequent a Christian society, and continue a course of life manifestly inconsistent with the profession of Christianity. He would feel himself reproved by the consciousness of the disesteem in which he was held by those whose esteem, from habits of friendship and society, he

could not but value, and would imagine even the silent countenance to mean more than it really did.

Consequently, this society, if (for whatever reason, whether of convenience, or the mere shame of quitting it) it was actually kept up, would constrain him at least to keep up an outward decent appearance; and then, if the foreign corrupt influence was not very strong, it would, in time, produce a greater conformity of life, and of heart also, to his profession, and he would at length perfectly assimilate with those with whom he associated. Also the admonitions of his Christian friends, which, while he frequented their society, he would be more in the way of receiving, would strongly operate to the same end.

If the foreign corrupt influence was too strong, he would abandon the society altogether; and this is the next good consequence to be desired, as it would tend to mark the distinction between the members of Christian societies, and the rest of the world. All these happy consequences would be more manifest, if Christian societies, in times of ease and indulgence, were more truly Christian, that is, if Christian zeal did not too naturally cool in such circumstances.

It is very evident, from this general view of the object of Christian societies, that the business of them may be considered as threefold, viz. *joint devotion*, *regular instruction*, and *particular admonition*. And the best provision was made for all these ends, in the constitution of the primitive churches; in which, besides a number of persons who undertook the management of the secular concerns of the society, and were called *deacons*, there were several others who bore the common title of *presbyters*, or *bishops*, and who were all *pastors* or *teachers*, distributing the work among them according to their several capacities, and at the same time giving particular attention to the conduct of all the members of the society: preventing irregularities, by seasonable admonition or reproof, and reporting particular cases to the whole church, if their private admonitions, and those of a few more of their brethren, had no effect. By this means, Christian churches were kept more pure, and free from unworthy members, and, consequently, every person had more restraints to break through, before he could act in a manner unbecoming a Christian, or reject the profession of Christianity.

This excellent institution was kept up, and had its full effect during some centuries, and long after the time when one of these presbyters more eminently qualified for his

office than the rest, having been carefully educated with a view to it, and giving his whole time and attention to the duties of it, (a distinction which, for obvious reasons, could not generally have taken place in the very primitive times,) had the style and rank of *bishop* appropriated to himself, leading the devotions of the congregation, being prepared to give them regular instruction, especially expounding the Scriptures every Lord's day, or at least, as often as occasion required. But at the request, or with the consent of the bishop, the presbyters discharged every part of his office, and they were sufficiently qualified to serve the churches of inferior rank, that were dependent on the principal church.

Unfortunately, as every thing that bears the name of *power* is liable to abuse, this has been the case with respect to the office of *elder* in our churches, and now the very name is lost among us; but with it we have likewise lost the uses of a valuable institution.

The minister, or public teacher, besides being a single person, is, from his situation and general circumstances, altogether inadequate to the work of private admonition or advice, and much more to that of *censure*, which requires the prudence and influence of a person of equal rank, and living in habits of society and friendship with the object of those acts of the truest friendship. The minister has no opportunity for these offices more than any other person, and therefore they cannot be expected of him. Besides, being too often entirely dependent upon his people for his subsistence, he cannot always be supposed to have that courage and independence of mind which is requisite for the faithful discharge of those most difficult duties.

Unfortunately, also, the times have generally been such, that this circumstance has operated to prevent even the instructions of the minister from having that extent and effect which they might otherwise have had; being in a manner limited to discourses from the pulpit, which are addressed chiefly to persons of some years and experience; whilst children, young persons, and those who are advancing to a state of manhood, have been less attended to, the time and labour of the ministers being employed on other objects.

Having, in a former situation, given particular attention to this evil, and having the advantage of some experience, I shall, with your approbation (having already the concurrence of my worthy colleague) attempt to remedy it. Happy shall we think ourselves, if, judging, as I hope you always will do, for yourselves, we shall have your hearty concur-

rence to what we shall think conducive to your own best interests, as members of a Christian society.

With respect to particular admonition, which we see in the epistles of *Paul* was more especially the business of the *presbyters* or *elders*, as it is likewise a duty incumbent upon *all* Christians; till it be thought proper to new-model our societies (which will require the greatest consideration, in order to guard against the abuses of former times) you must all hold yourselves in duty bound to do that as relations, friends, neighbours, and acquaintance, which you are not bound to do as officers in a regularly-constituted Christian church. And those who have need of it must receive, and be thankful for, every admonition proceeding from real friendship, as they value that *moral improvement* which is the end of it.

It would be happy if mankind could do without any forms of government, civil or ecclesiastical, and if all pains and penalties could be safely abolished, as well as church censures. But if every man were allowed, without fear, and without censure, to do *that which was right in his own eyes*, both themselves and others would soon find the inconvenience of it. However, with prudence in those whose place it is to give admonition, and docility in those who stand in need of it, something may be done to remedy the evils to which we are now exposed.

Besides the duties that are incumbent on the ministers and people of particular Christian societies, with respect to their own improvement and edification, we ought not to forget, that every Christian society, and every individual Christian, bears a relation to, and is part of, the whole Christian church; and therefore ought to consult what will be for its honour, and favour its propagation in those countries in which Christianity is not yet received.

Our Saviour and the apostles never fail to enforce the practice even of ordinary moral duties, from considerations which respect the edification of others as well as a man's self. We are to let our *light shine before men*, in order that *others may see our good works*, and thereby *glorify our Father who is in heaven*. (*Matt.* v. 16.) We are also to do nothing by which *our brother shall be offended*, (*Rom.* xiv. 21,) that is, made to offend; and that the knowledge of Christianity may be propagated in the world, no man must keep the belief of it to himself, but, if called upon, must, at all hazards, make public profession of his faith in Christ.

Now whatever it be that makes any person think in-

juriously of the Christian religion, so as to prevent his embracing it, prevents all that good which would arise from the reception of it. Every man, therefore, who holds opinions that are irrational and absurd, under the name of Christianity, opinions at which the common sense of Jews, Mahometans and Heathens is known to revolt, and on account of which they actually reject the Christian Revelation, does his part towards this evil, so that a certain portion of it lies at his door.

If Unbelievers take *unreasonable* offence, as the Jews at a suffering Messiah, and the Gentiles of old at a religion founded by a man who died upon a cross, they alone are answerable for their unjustifiable prepossessions; and the Christian, who exhibits his religion fairly, and suggests what *ought* to give satisfaction to those who *require a reason of his faith*, stands acquitted. He will also be free from blame if he take due pains to inform himself concerning the genuine doctrines of Christianity, and yet, through invincible prejudice, arising from his situation and circumstances, holds any errors, even those at which men stumble, and are offended, most of all. *But woe unto him by whom the offence cometh*, if it has arisen from any thing morally wrong in his disposition, as from negligence in his inquiries, or from his obstinacy in holding offensive errors, after reasonable means of conviction.

You need not be informed that it has pleased Divine Providence, which brings good out of all evil, to suffer our holy religion to be grossly corrupted, chiefly by a mixture of opinions and maxims derived from the philosophy of the Heathen world. These Heathen doctrines, utterly unsuitable to the genius and spirit of Christianity, and leading to a temper of mind the very reverse of it, have given the greatest countenance and support to that antichristian system, which has so long subjected this part of Christendom to the usurpations of the court of Rome.

A system of opinions, abuses and habits which had been taking root and extending themselves for more than a thousand years, cannot be expected to be reformed at once. Those who are more eminently styled *Reformers*, cannot, therefore, be supposed to have done more than a part, though a glorious and distinguished part, in this great and necessary work; and it behoves us, who come after them, not to keep the very ground which they occupied, but rather to be following their example, and advancing the work which they began.

Few men in a private station of life are justly entitled to a greater share of praise in this respect than your late excellent minister, Mr. Bourn; who, with the integrity, zeal, activity, and perseverance of an apostle, stood forth early the champion of gospel truth, and boldly opposed the progress of whatever he apprehended to be error. His light, my brethren, you now enjoy and rejoice in; let us then pursue the path in which he led the way, especially as by his invaluable labours, and those of others before us, the task is much easier and less hazardous now than it was in his time. Like him, let us rejoice if we be *counted worthy to suffer shame*, reproach, and abuse, or even more than this, in so noble a cause.*

Of these corrupt doctrines, the seeds of which were sown in a very early age, none gives so much just cause of alarm, and therefore ought more to excite the zeal of the truly enlightened friends of pure Christianity, and who wish well to its propagation among Jews and Mahometans, than that relapse into *idolatry* with which many who call themselves Christians are justly chargeable; an idolatry similar to that which it was the great object of the Jewish and Christian religions to overturn. For, in consequence of the worship of saints and angels in the Church of Rome, the true God is almost as much lost sight of as he was in the Heathen world, who worshipped stocks and stones, under the notion of their being emblems or representatives of the divinity.

Though this idolatry proceeded till it came to the worship of a piece of bread, as supposed to be the real body and blood of Christ, it began with paying divine honours to Christ himself; who, though the most distinguished mes-

* Mr. Samuel Bourn, father of the Rev. Mr. Bourn, of Norwich, was born at Calne in Wiltshire, [in 1689,] and was one of the first ministers at the New Meeting in Birmingham, to which he removed from Chorley in Lancashire, in 1732. He was succeeded by my immediate predecessor the Rev. Mr. Hawkes, the Rev. Mr. Blythe having been pastor along with him.

He greatly distinguished himself by his zeal against the doctrines that are generally termed *Calvinistical*, and by his firmness in encountering great opposition from the bigotry of his time. He was indefatigable in the discharge of his duty as a minister, especially in his attention to the younger part of his congregation, and he was also unwearied in his endeavours to serve the industrious poor wherever he lived.

He was attacked with a paralytic disorder in the pulpit, on the 17th of March, 1754, and died on the Friday following. See a short account of his life prefixed to his *Twenty Sermons*, published by his son. May my *course* and *latter end* be like his! *(P.)* See Vol. I, *Memoirs*, 156.

In 1808 Dr. Toulmin published *Memoirs* of his predecessor Mr. Bourn, with "Biographical Notices of some of his Contemporaries," and "Specimens of his Historical and Catechetical Exercises."

senger of God to man, himself uniformly asserted the proper unity of the Divine nature, and spake of his *Father*, exclusively of all other persons, or beings, as "the only true God," (*John* xvii. 3,) *his Father* as well as *our Father*, and *his God* as well as *our God*, (*John* xx. 17,) and whose highest title is, the "mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 *Tim.* ii. 5.) Observe, the apostle says *the man*, not the God, or the *God-man*, or super-angelic being, but simply, *the man Christ Jesus*. Though he reigns, he only reigns in subordination to that great Being who *put all things under his feet*, (1 *Cor.* xv. 28,) and to whom he must at length resign his delegated authority, "that God," the only living and true God, even the Father, "may be all in all."

In agreement with this, and with no other idea concerning Christ, the author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* [ii. 17] speaks of our Lord as being, "in all things—like unto his brethren;" and he is elsewhere styled *our elder brother*. In agreement with this we also read, (1 *Cor.* xv. 21,) that, as "by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead."

Our Saviour, therefore, differs from us not with respect to his *proper nature*, but only in the great perfection of his character, and in divine communications. Agreeably to which, he himself expressly disclaims all power originating with himself; saying, (*John* xiv. 10,) that *the words which he spake were not his own, but the Father's that sent him*, and that it was *the Father within him that did the works*, that is, the miracles which he wrought. Now, what truth could there have been in this if he had done these things by any proper divinity, or, indeed, any extraordinary power of *his own*, independent of that of his Father?

After the worship of Christ, the worship of his Virgin Mother was a very easy consequence; and then, so wide a breach being once made in the doctrine of the Divine Unity, there entered an innumerable host of men and angels, and, in times of ignorance and superstition, many names of mere Heathens, and some absolute nonentities.

It is well known that it is this doctrine of *a multiplicity of persons in the Deity*, or, which is the very same thing, a multiplicity of gods, at which *Jews* and *Mahometans* chiefly stumble: it is the doctrine of the proper Divine Unity that they are continually upbraiding the Christian world with departing from; and while they consider Christians as ido-

laters, it is no wonder that the Christian name is held in abhorrence by them, and that their conversion is effectually prevented.

For these important considerations, though it has been, and will be, my general practice, to confine my addresses from the pulpit to the enforcing of such doctrines and duties as all Christians are agreed in acknowledging, and which are certainly of the greatest importance to the happiness of individuals in this life and the next, I shall not fail, on all proper occasions, to hold up to your view, with its proper evidence, and as much energy as I can give to it, this great doctrine of the *proper unity of God*, and also some others nearly connected with it; I mean such as exhibit the moral character and government of God in such a light as shall make us rejoice in the consideration of our being the subjects of it, in opposition to such opinions concerning the Divine nature, and his government over us, as tend to make us regard him as an object of horror.

It cannot be too generally known, that there are Christians, and societies of Christians, by whom such doctrines are reprobated, with whom the *one only living and true God* is the sole object of worship, and who consider him in a character that they would respect and love in a parent, a judge, or a sovereign.

It is our duty, not only to search for the truth in matters of such consequence as this, but to bear the most public testimony to it. In God's time that testimony will have its weight; and they who uniformly and steadily hold it forth, will hereafter be considered as preachers of the gospel, and propagators of it, even to the ends of the earth; for it is only to be expected, and indeed it is only to be wished, that Christianity should become the religion of the whole earth, when it shall be purged from the corruptions which, at present, deform and disgrace it.

In this case, much more may be expected from us Dissenters than from the members of any civil establishment of religion in the world; because we are in more favourable circumstances, both for the discovery of truth, and the open profession of it. We, my brethren, are happily free from that vast weight of prejudice in which every member of an old establishment is necessarily educated. And if, in uncommonly favourable circumstances, their minds should be enlightened, their *testimony*, in favour of such a truth as this, can have but little weight, while they continue where they are. The conviction of even the majority of such members

might be far from procuring a change in creeds and forms of worship, which had been fixed, by public authority, in the time of their remote ancestors.

On this account, I hold it a point of duty and conscience not to attend, except in the character of a stranger, any worship in which any other than the one true God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the object of religious homage. It is, in fact, the same consideration that makes all religious Protestants scruple to join in the celebration of the mass. It is paying divine honours to *a creature;* and whether this be done to a *wafer* or to a *man*, the difference is not *in kind;* and with respect *to degree*, all creatures are equally as nothing, when held up in competition with the great Creator of all things, who alone is infinite and supreme.

For these reasons, when, of late years, I was without any ministerial charge, in preference to all other societies, several of which I could have attended with great satisfaction, I joined myself as a member of, I believe, the only Christian church in this country, and, in our times, that was expressly and originally formed on Unitarian principles; and in every situation I shall consider it as my glory to have been in fellowship with that society, and still to keep up an occasional communion with it.*

I choose to deliver myself in this explicit manner, at this time, with respect to the proper *unity of God*, and the proper *humanity of Christ*, both on account of the great importance of the subject, and as a specimen of the perfect freedom with which I shall always lay before you my real sentiments concerning any article of doctrine that I shall think of importance to propose to you. I do this both that you may not be deceived in me, and that I may not be deceived in you, but that I may know in time on what ground I stand. But I am confident that, with respect to the *object of worship*, in which it certainly behoves all who perform their devotions together, to be agreed, we shall not differ; and all other matters are of far inferior consequence.

Think not, however, my brethren, that the most fervent zeal for what are apprehended to be the genuine doctrines of the gospel, is at all inconsistent with true Christian charity,

* All who are acquainted with me will know that I mean the *Unitarian* congregation, formed by the Rev. Mr. Lindsey, *(quo mihi non devinctior alter,)* in Essex Street, London. I shall add nothing farther concerning him or his undertaking, lest I should be suspected of exaggeration. *(P.)* See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 109, 111, 112, 135, 137, 199; Vol. V. p. 3.

which always judges of particular persons according to the advantages they have enjoyed, and of the final state of men by their *sincerity* only. And, for my own part, I have no doubt but that, though the Church of Rome be the proper *antichrist* of the apostles, not only innumerable zealous papists, but even some popes themselves, and since the time of the Reformation, will sit down with *Luther*, with *Calvin*, and with *Socinus*, in the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Known unto God alone are the hearts of men; and the man who honestly pursues truth, and who acts according to the best lights that God gives him an opportunity of acquiring, will be he whom the God of truth and uprightness will approve; and none will suffer a greater or more just condemnation, than those who *hold the truth in unrighteousness.*

Much rather would I be in the case of many worthy persons in the Church of England, or the Church of Rome, who, at the same time that they are fully sensible of the corruptions and errors of the system in which they are entangled, are not able to break their chains, than, from a spirit the reverse of that of the gospel, make an improper use of my own liberty, by insulting them. Many, very many, it cannot be doubted, would have the courage to die at a stake, in times of serious persecution, who, in such times as ours, have not the *mental fortitude* to act the part of a *Robertson*,* a *Jebb*,† an *Evanson*,‡ or especially a

* Dr. William Robertson, author of "An Attempt to explain the Words Reason, Substance, Person, Creeds, Orthodoxy, Catholic-Church, Subscription, and Index Expurgatorius." Ed. 8, 1767. In 1760, Dr. R. conscientiously declined a benefice in the Church of Ireland, presented to him by the bishop of Ferns, in a letter to whom he thus describes his painful mental conflict, and the triumph of religious principle:

"In debating this matter with myself, besides the arguments directly to the purpose, several strong collateral considerations came in upon the positive side of the question. The straitness of my circumstances pressed me close: a numerous family, quite unprovided for, pleaded with the most pathetic and moving eloquence; and the infirmities and wants of age, now coming fast upon me, were urged feelingly. But one single consideration prevailed over all these—that the Creator and Governor of the universe, whom it is my first duty to worship and adore, being the God of truth, it must be disagreeable to him to profess, subscribe or declare, in any matter, relating to his worship and service, what is not believed strictly and simply to be true." *Attempt*, p. 251.

In 1768, Dr. R. acquired a very scanty pecuniary support, by "the mastership of the Free Grammar-School at Wolverhampton," where he died 1783, aged 77, after having endured, with exemplary Christian resignation, the affliction of surviving a highly-accomplished and affectionate wife and their *twenty-one* children. See Lindsey's *Apol.* pp. 239, 240; *Hist. View*, pp. 477, 478; *Mon. Repos.* I. pp. 169—172, 179, 180, 225—229, 281—285; *Mem. of Lindsey*, pp. 163—175.

† See Vol. III. p. 449, *Note*; Lindsey's *Hist. View*, pp. 478—486.

‡ See *Mon. Repos.* I. pp. 1—7, 57—63.

*Lindsey.** No person educated a Dissenter can pretend to such merit as this, because none of us have been in their circumstances; and I hope there may be great merit in human characters far short of theirs.

On this account, the considerations which I urged in the beginning of this discourse, on the Uses of Christian Societies, as a means of preserving purity of manners, are of infinitely more importance than any thing that respects the mere profession of the truth, on which I have now been insisting. Indeed, it is the former alone that can give much weight to the latter.

In many matters of speculation, you and I, my Christian brethren, may judge very differently, as you will from one another, if you judge for yourselves at all. But this circumstance, instead of quenching Christian charity, ought to be considered as a proper trial and exercise of that most valuable Christian virtue. I shall, as I trust I have hitherto done, devote myself to the pursuit of truth; and I shall not fail to lay before you, with the best evidence that I can collect, every thing that shall appear to me to be of any moment to you, as members of a Christian society; and I shall cheerfully rely on your candour with respect to any articles in which you may think me to be mistaken.

I trust that, notwithstanding every possible difference, we shall *live in love and peace, provoking to love and to good works*, a pattern to other societies, of a zeal for truth, but of a greater zeal for virtue; walking in every statute and ordinance of the Lord, if not blamelessly, at least honestly; that *the God of love and peace* may be with us, and that when our present relation to each other shall cease, we shall have so acquitted ourselves during the continuance of it, that we your ministers shall be able to present many of you, together with ourselves, before *the presence of his glory with exceeding joy;* and that we shall then make part of that church of Christ, which shall be gathered from all *nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, complete in Christ their head.*

May his name be honoured, may his church be purged from all the corruptions which at present defile, disgrace, and confine it; and then may the *Jews*, together with *the fulness of the Gentiles*, flow into it; that all "the kingdoms of the world *may* become the kingdoms of our Lord and of

* See *supra*, p. 42; Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 109, 110; Vol. V. p. 3; *Mem. of Lindsey*, pp. 71, 72.

his Christ," [*Rev.* xi. 15,] and he may *reign* till that time shall come, when he shall "have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father,—that God may be all in all." [1 *Cor.* xv. 24, 28.] To him, as supreme over all, be glory for ever. Amen.

The proper Constitution of a Christian Church, considered in

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT

THE NEW MEETING IN BIRMINGHAM,

NOVEMBER 3, 1782;

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

A PREFATORY DISCOURSE,

Relating to the present State of those who are called

Rational Dissenters.

[First published in 1782.]

PREFATORY DISCOURSE.

THOUGH I formerly published an *Essay on Church Discipline*,* yet, as I wish to draw more attention to the subject, I willingly comply with the subjoined request of the society I have the happiness to serve, to publish this *Sermon*, which has the same general object. I cannot help thinking that an attention to the original constitution of Christian churches, and the business proper to them, would greatly contribute to supply what is wanting to the flourishing state of what I must consider as the most respectable part of the body of professing Christians: for such I ought to esteem those with whom I choose to rank myself.

It has long been complained of, that, notwithstanding the converts, which it cannot be denied are continually making to the principles of the *rational*, or *Unitarian* Dissenters,†

* "A Free Address to Protestant Dissenters, on the Subject of Church Discipline; with a Preliminary Discourse, concerning the Spirit of Christianity and the Corruptions of it, by false Notions of Religion." 1770.

† Though I use the term *rational* and *Unitarian* Dissenters as synonymous, most of the observations in this discourse relate to those Dissenters who have only re-

both from Dissenters of various denominations, and also from the Established Church; yet their societies do not flourish, their members have but a slight attachment to them, and easily desert them, though it is never imagined that they desert their principles. The case is no where so striking as it is in London, though it is sufficiently so in many parts of the country.

A fact so remarkable as this cannot escape observation, and persons of a speculative turn cannot help forming some conjecture or other concerning the cause of it, especially as this is not the case, at least not in so great a degree, with those who profess any other form of religion. *Jews* generally continue Jews, and *Mahometans* continue Mahometans; *Quakers* seldom desert their friends, and neither the *Independents* nor the *Baptists* leave the societies to which they belong, unless they change their opinions. And yet, though it is no vanity to say that the *Unitarian* Dissenters consist, for the most part, of men of reading and reflection, they have not that attachment to each other, or to their respective societies, that Christians of other denominations have.

One cause certainly is, that though *Unitarian* Dissenters are not apt to entertain any doubt of the truth of their principles, they do not lay so much stress upon them as other Christians do upon theirs. Nor, indeed, is there any reason why they should, when they do not consider the holding of them to be at all *necessary to salvation*, which other Christians often do with respect to theirs. They, therefore, take much less pains to make proselytes, and are less concerned to inculcate their principles upon their children, their servants, and their dependents in general.

Besides, it cannot be denied that many of those who judge so truly concerning particular tenets in religion, have attained to that cool, unbiassed temper of mind, in consequence of becoming more indifferent to religion in general, and to all the modes and doctrines of it. Though, therefore, they are in a more favourable situation for distinguishing between truth and falsehood, they are not likely to acquire a *zeal* for what they conceive to be the truth. Consequently,

jected the doctrines of *Calvinism*, as well as to those who have rejected the doctrine of *the divinity of Christ*. Indeed, whole congregations who would not scruple to avow themselves *Unitarians* are not many. But as a few years ago there were hardly any, it may be hoped that some years hence there will be more, both in London, and in the country. *(P.)* The present encouraging prospect of a return to *the simplicity that is in Christ*, by an increasing number of Christian communities, shews that the author's hopes were not vainly indulged, nor his labours unproductive of abundant fruit.

when they are satisfied with respect to any controverted question, concerning which they may have had the curiosity to make some inquiry, they presently dismiss the subject from their thoughts; and thus, never reading or thinking about it, except when it is casually mentioned, they are not in the way of being interested in it, and cannot be expected to make any great sacrifices to it.

From this principle it is, that great numbers becoming *Unitarians* in the Church of England, and even among the clergy, do not feel the impropriety and absurdity, to say nothing more harsh, of continuing to countenance a mode of worship which, if they were questioned about it, they could not deny to be, according to their own principles, idolatrous and blasphemous. Such persons also, having no zeal for speculative religion, merely because they have no zeal for religion in general, their moral conduct, though decent, is not what is deemed strict and exemplary.

From a just aversion to every thing that looks like hypocrisy and preciseness, they rather lean to the extreme of freedom and fashionable dissipation. They are not altogether destitute of religion, but they do not value themselves upon it, and do not wish to become the subjects of conversation, or to draw any particular notice upon themselves on that account. They would be ashamed to abandon their religion, but they neither themselves think, nor do they wish others to think much about it.

To persons who consider human nature, and what usually takes place in similar circumstances, this cannot be thought at all extraordinary. It may easily be conceived, that persons who trouble themselves very little about religion or Christianity, and therefore on whom the principles of it can have little practical influence, may yet have the good sense, if they should be led to turn their thoughts to the subject, to perceive that Christ, who had nothing in his external appearance different from that of any other man, who always disclaimed any superior powers of his own, and who expressly asserted that his *Father* was *the only true God*, (which might be seen on a very slight inspection of the gospel history,) could not be the Supreme God himself, or the Maker of the world in any sense of the word. The connexion between this simple truth and a regular Christian life, is very slight.

It requires very particular *attention* to the doctrines of the gospel, and the great object of it, viz. the revelation of a

fuutre life, before it can, in the nature of things, impress the heart and change the life. And men of the world, though of good understanding, and some reading, may well be supposed to stop at the mere speculative truth. There must, no doubt, be great numbers in this situation, in Dissenting congregations, as well as elsewhere. Were all the speculative *Unitarians* in the Church of England to become serious Christians, and, consequently, think it their duty to leave it, the desertion would be very conspicuous and alarming.

In fact, there is no greater reason to complain of the lukewarmness of the generality of *Unitarians*, than there is of the generality of Christians of all denominations. There are few persons in comparison in this country, and indeed in Europe, but who are nominally believers in Christianity, and who would be affronted if their faith should be called in question; and yet the bulk of these professing Christians are nothing more than Christians *in name*. In the course of their lives, they give very little attention to their principles, and whatever virtue or good conduct they may have, it is the mere effect of habit, and of the general influences to which they are exposed, derived ultimately, I doubt not, from the Christianity of their parents, and that of preceding generations, but not immediately from any Christianity of their own.

We shall the less wonder at this being the case at present, when, if we look back into history, we shall find that it was the same even at the first promulgation of Christianity, when every professing Christian was so from himself, and without having been educated one. In our Saviour's own life-time, great numbers, probably the bulk of the people of the Jews, were satisfied that he was a real prophet, and after his resurrection, that he was the *Messiah*, and therefore ought to have ranked with Christians; but yet, through fear, shame, or some other sinister influence, did not openly do it. Also, in those who did join themselves to the society of Christians, there were all degrees of faith and of firmness, and probably few of them, in comparison, would have had the courage to be martyrs. In order, therefore, to form a just estimate of the number of those whom we should now call Christians, or who believed the resurrection of Christ, we must, in the first place, make great allowance for those who would not bear much suffering or persecution for the sake of Christ, which, in those times, was almost unavoidable, and a still greater allowance for the numbers of those

who, in such perilous times, contented themselves with thinking well of the Christian cause, without ever joining it at all.

At the time of the Reformation, many persons were sufficiently convinced of the absurdity of the popish system, and of the tyranny of the Church of Rome, who yet acquiesced in it, without finding themselves disposed either to *do* or to *suffer* much for the sake of a reform. Many who had the courage to join the Reformers, where they could do it with little danger, were only men of good understanding, but immersed in all the vices of the times, and were a disgrace to the Reformation. Of this, *Erasmus* made great, and probably just complaint. "We have been stunned long enough," he said, "with the cry of *gospel*, *gospel*, *gospel*. We want *gospel* manners.*

It is, therefore, nothing extraordinary, if a great number of the *Unitarians* of the present age be only men of good sense, and without much practical religion, while others of them who do give proper attention to their principles, as Christians and *Unitarians*, are, as their enemies must acknowledge, the most exemplary of men. Upon the whole, considering the great mixture of spiritual pride and bigotry in some of the most zealous *Trinitarians*, I think the moral character of the *Unitarians* in general, allowing that there is in them a greater apparent conformity to the world than is observable in the others, approaches more nearly to the proper temper of Christianity. It is more cheerful, more benevolent, and more candid. The former have probably less, and the latter, I hope, something more, of a real principle of religion than they seem to have.

These *Unitarians*, however, wanting a sufficient degree of zeal for their principles, and not valuing themselves upon them, cannot be supposed to have much attachment to the Christian societies to which they nominally belong, or to inculcate their principles with much earnestness upon their children. These, therefore, having never heard much upon the subject, and much less than their parents, will not be so well established in their principles as their parents are, and will be still less attached to Christian societies. In these circumstances, a marriage into a family in which other principles are professed with more zeal, or such an increase of fortune as shall raise a man above the level of his fellow-worshippers, and thereby lead him into other connexions,

* Jortin's *Life of Erasmus*, p. 442. *(P.)* A. D. 1528.

will be sufficient to carry him, *Unitarian* as he may be in principle, into the Established Church, or make him neglect public worship entirely. As to those *Unitarians* who both understand their principles and feel the importance of them, there is no danger of their ever forsaking them, or the societies of professed *Unitarians* to which they belong.

This being, I apprehend, the state of the fact, two things seem to me to be wanting to the good and permanent state of our societies. The first is, that care be taken to instruct our children in the principles that we profess, and to bring the subject frequently before them, which alone can beget an attachment to them, like to that which we perceive in the children of *Mahometans*, *Jews*, *Papists*, and the foreign *Protestants*. We must contrive to introduce these things into the daily or frequent employment of our children; and though this may be sometimes even irksome to them, yet, within certain bounds, it will contribute to make them less able to do without their religion. It will in time be of so much importance to them, that nothing else will be able to supply its place. But to expect this effect, without the necessary preparation for it, in the previous instruction and habits of their lives, is to sit still and look for miracles.

Now, we can never reasonably expect that this careful instruction of youth, though it be the proper duty of parents, will ever be sufficiently attended to by *all* parents, unless it be an express object in the Christian societies to which they belong. But when once it is well understood to be the standing rule of any Christian society, that all the children belonging to it are to be instructed, and regularly examined in the principles of Christianity, the parents will be ashamed of their deficiencies, and will be reminded to exert themselves, in order to prevent that reproach, because it will, in fact, fall upon themselves. However, let the parents be ever so remiss, the business will be done, in some degree or other, even independently of them.

In this obviously important business, the *rational*, or *Unitarian* Dissenters have been strangely negligent; and yet a tolerable apology may be made for the past conduct of the ministers, as far as the neglect has been theirs. Till very lately, few of them have been at liberty to make use of any other forms of instruction, than such as have contained principles which they could not inculcate with a good conscience, and therefore, when the business was not absolutely insisted upon, they chose to decline it; leaving to the parents what is, no doubt, their duty, but which, when neglected by

the minister, will too often be wholly neglected by themselves.

Foreign *Protestants*, I believe, of all denominations, pay the strictest attention to this business of the religious instruction of their children and youth, and they find the happy effects of it. In *Geneva*, I am informed, that all persons, without regard to rank or fortune, are put into a course of catechetical instruction, from twelve to fourteen years of age, after which they are always examined by the pastor, and then constantly become communicants, or receive the Lord's Supper, which they afterwards never neglect.

Being at *Strasburgh* in the year 1774,* I had the curiosity to go into one of the *Lutheran* churches, at six o'clock in the morning, and at that early hour I found three ministers doing duty in three different parts of the church. One of them was instructing a class of young children; another, one of bigger boys and girls; and the third, a class of young women, full grown. In another church I found two ministers so employed, and this on a week-day. I was much struck, and I hope edified by the sight. I was informed that this business of catechising is indispensable with all the *Lutherans*, and that, as in *Geneva*, they all become communicants at the age of fourteen, or even younger. Both these things tend to produce an attachment to their religion, and make them less liable to desert it, or their respective churches.

As the cause of our past neglect is now happily removed, by the more liberal turn of our congregations, (a turn which perhaps, however, they would not have acquired so soon, if the rigid institutions of our ancestors had been kept up,) so that ministers are at full liberty to adopt whatever methods of instruction they shall themselves most approve, it may be hoped that a sense of the importance of this attention to children and young persons will again strike us, and that the effects of it will be as happy, and as conspicuous with us as it is with others; enforcing and perpetuating liberal principles, together with a regard to what is most practical and useful in the religion we profess. Could this attention be given by the Clergy to all the children belonging to the Established Church, how much profligacy, both in the higher and the lower ranks of people, might it not prevent! We might then travel and sleep with more security

* See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 116, *ad fin.*

than we can do at present, especially in the neighbourhood of the Metropolis.

In no part of the Christian world, perhaps, is the instruction of the common people so much neglected as it is in this country. Mr. Richards says,* "The carriers in general are sober and careful, and it is usual, in this part of the world, (viz. between Dantzic and Berlin,) to join in prayer and other devotions, in the morning, on the roads, and often at other times. Religion does not seem here the effect of hypocrisy or enthusiasm, but the natural consequence of early endeavours in parents to instil religious notions into their children."

If it should be inconvenient to some families for the children to attend the constant instructions of the minister, as on account of many of them being educated from home, there might, at least, be *annual examinations*, for which the children should prepare themselves, that both the minister and the congregation at large might have the satisfaction to know that the instruction of all the children and youth belonging to them was not wholly neglected, notwithstanding any circumstances that might be rather unfavourable to it.

The second thing wanting to the coherence of the members of our societies, I apprehend to be the restoration of the office of *elders*, whose business it was to give due attention to every thing in which the welfare of the society was concerned, and especially to give admonitions and reproofs, when they were apprehended to be necessary. Some time ago, Dissenting ministers, getting a more liberal turn of thinking than the generality of their hearers, found themselves incommoded by these elders, and therefore suffered them, wherever they could, to be disused. But the consequence of this has been, that our congregations have become mere *audiences*, the members of them having little attachment to each other, except in their preference of the same preacher; an inconvenience on which I have enlarged in my *Essay on Church Discipline*, and also in this Discourse.

To create an attachment to any cause, we must, if we consult human nature, make it a constant object of attention to all who profess an adherence to it, by giving them something to do with respect to it, and also something to hope

* In his *Tour to Petersburgh*, through Germany, p. 143. *(P.)*

and something to fear. Was it ever known that any man became attached to any kind of society in which he was a mere cipher, in which he had no sphere of action, and when nothing that he did had any chance of being heard of, or of being mentioned to his praise, either in the society or out of it? And yet this is generally the case with our societies, except on the change of a minister, when a few persons have an opportunity of distinguishing themselves by the support of their favourite candidates.

Many persons are too fearful of giving offence, and are perhaps apprehensive lest they should disgust and lose some of the society, by the exercise of any thing like church discipline, concerning which they have entertained a frightful idea, from having heard of the abuses of it. But if we abandon every thing that has been abused, we must give up Christianity itself. In consequence of these apprehensions, however, let a man behave ever so ill in some of our societies, and become ever so great a disgrace to us, there are many who would never disclaim, or even censure him; not considering that for one that they might lose through a disgust of this kind, they now lose ten through indifference.

In this course, things have proceeded with us till the whole business of admonition, which in all societies cannot but be often requisite, is now wholly left to the minister; and by him, for very obvious reasons, it can never be expected to be applied. Indeed, considering the situation of Dissenting ministers, it is wonderful that they should have the virtue to struggle with their other difficulties, and those arising from a narrow and insufficient income, at the the same time; and yet the circumstances of the Dissenting laity in this country are such, that, obliged as they are to contribute their full share to the expense of an enormous establishment, from which they derive no advantage, greater exertions in favour of their ministers cannot be expected of them.

In this situation, let the ministers be ever so excellent, and willing to do their duty, they are but *men*, and therefore exertions more than human cannot be expected of them. It is unfortunate also, that the remains of a superstitious veneration for the ministerial character, have been the means of preventing them from receiving that assistance in some parts of their work which other members of the society might, with peculiar advantage, give them.

The inconvenience of our present system, if it can be called one, is peculiarly visible in the Metropolis; for in the country, at least in this part of it, there is more of the

appearance of Christian churches, and therefore we keep together better. There Dissenters are little more than *hearers* of this or that particular person, whom they pay for his services, and who may therefore be expected to study their *good will* more than their *edification*. In this situation, without more disinterested virtue than we ought to expect in man, he will naturally attend most to the more ostentatious duties of his office, and neglect the rest. Of course, all regular instruction of youth has long been forgotten among them; and the consequence is, that the present generation, having been brought up with little knowledge of their principles as *Christians*, *Protestants*, or *Dissenters*, have little attachment to them; and mixing with the wide world, they are soon lost to every thing that is good or great, without its being considered as any person's particular business, in the language of Scripture, *to seek and to save* them.

Dissenters in London, having no connexion with one another, and having nothing to do with their minister, except in the character of a *preacher*, come at length to attend to nothing but his eloquence and delivery; and if these are not sufficient to keep them attached to any place, they go for their *entertainment* (for it deserves no other name) elsewhere; and in this way, acquiring a false and fastidious taste, they become, at length, indifferent to every thing of the kind; and indeed it can be no wonder, for then it is a poor object.

It is said, that in London, children and young persons cannot attend the catechetical instructions of the ministers, on account of their being educated from home. Admitting this to be the case, some degree of attention might be given to them, at least, in the way of general examination, at the season of their usual return from school. But what is become of that class of people who cannot afford to send their children to distant schools? It is observed, that some congregations in or near London, consist, for the most part, of persons of fortune, and their servants. Can those most important classes of men, the lowest and the middle ranks, have been lost to the Dissenters in any place, without there having been some fault in the constitution or government of our churches? If these people, which constitute the basis of the great pyramid of human society, be vanished, the whole superstructure may justly be expected to subside, and disappear in due succession.

Now, however, before it be too late, is the time to revive an useful church discipline among us. I trust we shall do

so when we have sufficiently reflected on the subject, and that we shall experience the happy effects of it. But being a thing that, of late, we have not been used to, it will require peculiar discretion at the outset, and therefore it may be adviseable to do it by degrees; and the easiest of all introductions is, to apply it to the sole purpose of giving the minister some assistance in the business of catechising. This also will be the means of establishing and securing the advantage of it to posterity; for when there shall be persons appointed, whose business it will be to see that the children and young persons are properly attended to, it will become a measure of the congregation itself, and will no longer depend upon the inclination of any particular minister. Future ministers will then have no choice but that of the method and form of doing it, and in this they should by no means be dictated to. The thing itself must then be done, since it will be as much expected of them as preaching, being in reality of more importance in itself.

To prevent all possible abuse of the institution of *Elders*, I should think it adviseable that they be chosen *annually*, and by *ballot;* and let it also be generally understood, that all the best qualified members of the society shall serve, though not regularly, in *rotation*. There is no reason, either in the nature of the thing, or that can be drawn from the Scriptures, that the office should be for life. The idea of a *fixed spiritual character* has been the source of great abuse. The people who *create*, must likewise have the power to *change* their own officers. They give them no qualifications, but only make trial of those they have. If any persons appear to be peculiarly well qualified to serve the society in this capacity, they will naturally bs chosen again and again; and there is no reason why the people should not be served in what they think the best manner; but let them always have the power to undo what themselves have done, if they should wish to do it.

The congregation at the New Meeting, in Birmingham, having (in consequence of the singular zeal and exemplary conduct of my predecessors, and my excellent colleague, whom I may reckon among them) attained to a degree of liberality of sentiment hardly equalled in any other place, is in circumstances peculiarly favourable for the measure that I would recommend. There being no material difference of opinion between the ministers and people, and the ministers having the most perfect confidence in each other and in the people, they can have no reason to appre-

hend the least inconvenience to themselves from any scheme that has the good of the society in general for its object. Neither the business of *catechising*, nor the office of *Elders*, can have any thing formidable to them. This latter can only operate to aid them in the execution of what they may devise for the common good.

In these singularly favourable circumstances, it would, certainly, be highly blameable not to take the advantage that is hereby given us, either to revive any truly valuable institution, or to devise any new one that may promise to be useful to ourselves, and thus serve as an example to others. And I hope that, considering the effects of prejudices and habits of long standing, we have not been negligent, and that we are manifestly in a progress to a state of still greater improvement. I do not mean by forming more new institutions, but by the natural operation and effect of such as have been formed already. By the last, to which this discourse relates, sufficient provision will, I hope, be made for the most substantial benefit to the society in all future time.

The most important objects being now gained, there is less reason to be solicitous about any thing farther. And whatever may hereafter be thought expedient will, by this means, be more easily carried into execution than any thing that has been done already. I trust that ministers and people will have no other study or ambition but *to build one another up in the holy faith* whereof we make profession, and "to provoke unto love, and to good works." [*Heb.* x. 24, *Jude* 20.]

Birmingham New Meeting-House,

Rev. Sir, *Nov.* 24, 1782.

We, the subscribers to this place, are now assembled in consequence of the Sermon you have delivered us upon the Constitution of a Christian Church, and, in conformity with the proposal you then made, we have proceeded to the choice of twelve persons to superintend the affairs of the congregation.

Under a full persuasion that the Sermon alluded to may be extensively useful to our Dissenting brethren in general, we cannot but wish its publication, and do now very cheerfully concur in expressing this wish; not doubting of its meeting a candid acceptance, and also a cheerful compliance, unless you have substantial reasons for declining it.

Permit us, Sir, to embrace this opportunity of conveying our united thanks for your exemplary diligence in the pas-

toral office, and particularly in the truly important work of catechising and lecturing the children and youth of the congregation. Your unparalleled assiduity and labour, in this great duty, entitles you to our warmest and affectionate gratitude; and whilst we desire to assure you, that we have a deep sense of the obligations you have thereby laid us under, you will give us leave to add our fervent wishes, that the good success which already dawns upon these labours, may go on to increase still more abundantly, and that generations to come may rise up and call you Blessed!

Signed in the name, and on the behalf of the Congregation,

JOSEPH SMITH.

This voluntary testimony from the Christian society I now serve, (and which, I trust, I shall be more and more solicitous to merit,) together with a similar one from the congregation at Leeds, on leaving that place, I think more truly honourable than the thanks of our House of Commons to an admiral or general. I hope, however, I shall have a still greater respect to the plaudit of our common Master, whose commission, by which the conduct of all ministers of the gospel should be governed, is, (*John* xxi. 15, 16,) to feed his *lambs* as well as his *sheep*.

SERMON.

Rev. iii. 2.

Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die.

In the first Discourse that I addressed to you, after my acceptance of the invitation with which you honoured me, to undertake the pastoral office among you, in conjunction with my worthy colleague, I took the liberty to point out the proper objects of all truly Christian Societies, and to give a general idea of what appeared to me to be the best method of gaining them, with a reference to some things relating to the constitution of a Christian church, on which I intended to explain myself farther at some future opportunity; and on that subject I shall now take the liberty to discourse more fully. What I shall now propose is, in fact, a continuation of my first Discourse, and also of another that I delivered on the subject of *religious knowledge*, in which I proposed the *system of catechising*, that has since been

carried into execution; having purposely given you a proper trial of part of the plan before I proposed the remainder.

Something, I observed, and indeed much, was to be done by your ministers, but that more depended upon yourselves. The business of *instruction*, both promiscuous to all descriptions of persons from the pulpit, and what, for my own part, I deem to be more really useful still, the instruction of young persons of different ages separately, is almost all that can be undertaken with propriety, and good effect, by any persons in the situation of *ministers*. But there are duties (which yet we find in the *New Testament* to be indispensable in the members of the same society) which can only be well done by those who are in a situation very different from theirs.

Now it is the duty of us, your ministers, freely to propose to you whatever we apprehend to be for your advantage as a Christian society, only requesting your candid attention to what may be offered in its favour, that you would then judge for yourselves, with the same freedom with which we propose, and either adopt or neglect what may be recommended to you, as you yourselves shall think fit. But we must take it for granted that, as you have formed yourselves into a Christian society, it is your serious wish that the proper *ends* of such a society be answered among you. Why else do you call yourselves Christians, and assemble here as such? We can therefore only differ about the *means*.

Whatever society a man voluntarily makes himself a member of, he ought to study the improvement and flourishing state of it, and endeavour to make it answer its proper end in the best manner. This you would do, of course, as members of a philosophical society, or of any corporation, or civil society. In these circumstances you would study the original constitution of that society, and if any hurtful innovations had crept into it, you would think it your duty to restore it to its first principles, and at all events make it to answer its proper purpose.

On the same maxims we ought to act as members of *Christian societies;* and considering that our object, as Christians, is of infinitely more moment to us than any thing that we can have in view by philosophical or civil societies, we should study the principles of Christianity, and the constitution of Christian churches, with more attention than we do any thing else, and labour more to bring them to their proper perfection.

No doubt can be entertained of the use and propriety of the original constitution of Christian churches, since they

were founded by the apostles themselves; and their regulations were by no means of a temporary nature, confined to their own age, but were such as, from the nature of things, and of man, must be of equal use in all ages. I shall therefore, on this occasion, give you a general idea of the principles on which Christian churches were originally formed, and the outline of their primitive constitution, with the advantages resulting from it; and I shall then represent what it is that we suffer by our deviation from their plan, and what I think may be adviseable for us to do in our present circumstances.

Since Christianity, like any other religion, consists of *doctrines* which all Christians believe, and those who are not Christians do not believe, it is evident that no person can be a proper member of a Christian society who is not a Christian in principle. Though, therefore, a *Heathen* or a *Mahometan*, a *Deist* or an *Atheist*, should, for any particular reason, choose to attend the worship of this place, and contribute to the support of it, you could not consider him as a proper member of your society. You meet here as *Christians*, and therefore cannot consider any other than a Christian as one of your body.

But this was not the only thing that the apostles consulted in forming Christian societies. They chiefly respected the ultimate and proper object of Christianity, which was the forming good men, men fearing God, and conscientiously discharging the moral duties of life, as preparatory to that immortal state which it was the great object of Christianity fully to reveal to us. Without this they considered a man to be as effectually unqualified for being a member of a Christian society as if he had been an unbeliever; because his nominal belief of Christianity had no proper influence on his behaviour in life.

Our Saviour himself has fully authorized us to consider any person, how nearly soever connected with us, (for he uses the term *brother*,) who obstinately resists reasonable admonition with respect to his moral conduct, as *a Heathen man and a publican*. Also, the man at *Corinth*, who had married his father's wife, is not said to have been an unbeliever in Christianity, (indeed, in those days, there was no temptation for any such persons to join themselves to Christian societies,) and yet the apostle *Paul* gives the most peremptory orders to excommunicate him, and to disclaim all connexion with him. All Christians ought to be persons whose *light should shine before men, that others may see their*

good works. [*Matt.* v. 16.] They ought "to provoke unto love and to good works," [*Heb.* x. 24,] and *not suffer sin in each other;* making converts to Christianity by their lives, no less than by their doctrine and arguments.

Whatever, therefore, gives public offence or scandal, tends to defeat the principal end of Christian societies, according to the idea that the apostles evidently had of them. And in all the primitive times we find that the most rigorous attention was given to the conduct of all professing Christians. Every person whose conduct in life was deemed to be unworthy of his Christian profession was as certainly disowned by them, as if he had renounced the belief of Christianity; nor was he ever re-admitted to the privileges of any Christian society, till, by a due course of penitence, the cause of scandal was deemed to be removed.

Pliny, a civil magistrate under the emperor *Trajan*, about seventy years after the death of Christ, giving an account of the Christians to his master,* from the information of those who during the persecution had deserted them, says, that they were persons who bound themselves by an oath, not to the commission of any wickedness, (with which in those times they were generally charged,) but not to be guilty of theft, robbery, adultery, or other immoralities which he particularly enumerates; so that it was not so much the belief of any particular tenets, as the practice of virtue that made a person a proper member of a Christian society in that early age. This discipline cannot be denied to have had a most extraordinary effect for several centuries, and indeed the extreme rigour of it was one of the causes of the fatal relaxation of all proper discipline in after ages. But when so many causes contributed to the corruption of the *faith* of Christians, it could not be expected that their *discipline* alone should remain pure and uncorrupted.

It has pleased God, by the light of the *Reformation*, to remove many of the abuses, both in doctrine and discipline, and we now see Christian churches assuming a different and better appearance. But it could not be expected that any set of men, in any age, should be able to rectify such a multiplicity of abuses as had deformed our holy religion in the dark ages of Popery, and which had in a great measure defeated the proper end and object of it.

Our ancestors, the *Puritans*, removed still farther from the doctrine and discipline of what had been called the *Catholic*

* See Vol. IV. pp. 485, *(Note,)* 542; Vol. XIV. p. 408, *Note* ‖.

Church, than those who framed the constitution of the Church which is by law established in this country. We, the Protestant Dissenters of this age, have improved, as we think, upon their system of *doctrine*, but we do not seem to have given so much attention as we ought to have done, to matters of *discipline;* and for want of this, many of the most valuable ends of Christian societies are but imperfectly obtained among us. Indeed, we are so far relaxed in this respect, that we want the necessary principles of *union* and *permanency*, which all societies should consult. For Christian societies should govern themselves by the rules of human prudence and policy, as well as other societies. It was sufficient for Christianity to have been established at first by miracles, and it must now support itself by its own evidence, and the wise constitution of its churches.

If you ask what was the constitution of the Christian churches in the time of the apostles, I answer, it may easily be collected from the *New Testament*, and it appears to have been extremely simple and effectual, with respect to its object. Wherever a number of persons were brought to embrace Christianity, so that a *church* could be formed, the apostle directed that *elders* should be ordained for the instruction and government of that church. The number of them was indefinite, but they consisted of the most knowing and prudent of the members, and in general they were also persons of property and natural influence in the place. If the church was large, they also chose younger persons, whom they called *deacons*, to attend to things of an inferior nature. Every thing relating to the instruction or government of the church, was determined by the elders in ordinary cases, but the people at large had votes in all cases of consequence. In the *New Testament*, these elders are promiscuously called *bishops* or *overseers*, and at first, none of them had any pre-eminence or authority over the rest. Afterwards this title of *bishop* was appropriated to one of the *elders*, who presided at their meetings, but who had no more real power than any of the others.

In the ordinary meetings of Christians, the Scriptures were read, and also explained, if any person present was thought qualified to do it; hymns were sung, prayers were made, and in early times, the Lord's Supper was always administered.

How these primitive bishops rose to the rank and power of bishops in the Church of Rome, and one of them to be Pope, claiming all power in heaven and earth, how these

elders came to be the same with those who were afterwards called *priests*, and how the deacons likewise came to have a similar *sacred character*, in consequence of which, the *clergy* and *laity* were considered as classes of men totally different from each other, and to be governed by different laws, I shall not attempt to shew in this place.* Divine Providence suffered the abuses, enormous as they were, to arise from natural causes; and by natural causes also, and the use of human endeavours, it has pleased the same Divine Providence, that the abuses should be rectified. But much of them still remains, and of the inconveniences that must ever attend them, even among us who call ourselves *rational Dissenters*, and who have receded the farthest from the Church of Rome, and the maxims of it.

It was in consequence of the great distinction between the *clergy* and the *laity*, that the former, instead of being considered only as men who are chosen to a certain office by the people (an office which they were equally qualified to fill before their appointment to it) were regarded as men who had a peculiar *character*, and peculiar *powers*, conferred by God himself, in a supernatural manner, in the ceremony of consecration; so that the sacraments of the church (the virtue of which was immoderately magnified) were not deemed to be valid, unless they should be administered by a priest, regularly ordained for that purpose.

Now are we Dissenters entirely free even from this superstition? How few congregations are there, who would permit their own ministers, persons regularly educated to their office, and who have preached with universal approbation among them for many years, to baptize their children, or to administer the Lord's Supper, before they were formally ordained? This is a great disgrace to most of our congregations. And how many more are there who would be shocked at the thought of having their children baptized by any layman, though he should be ever so good a Christian, and even learned? And yet we find that in the times of the apostles, this business of baptizing was considered as a kind of work inferior to that of preaching. For Paul says, [1 *Cor.* i. 17,] "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel."

In some respects those who are called *rational Dissenters*, lay more stress upon the ministry of persons regularly educated, than others do; so that when their numbers are

* See "The History of Ministers in the Christian Church," Vol. V. pp. 361—389.

too small, or their funds too low, to maintain such a person, rather than serve themselves by reading the Scriptures, proper discourses, and prayers (for which sufficient helps might easily be procured) they dissolve themselves, and suffer the cause of religious truth and religious liberty, which they really value, to become extinct in the place.

In places where there may happen to be only two or three families of *Unitarians*, or *rational Dissenters*, what a foundation would be laid for the propagation of their principles, if they could so far get over this prejudice, as to form *a regular society*, and serve themselves in all the offices of a Christian church, without the aid of a person who has no more of *a spiritual character* than themselves; and when they could readily command the labours of the ablest Christian writers for their ordinary edification! But so used are they to the idea of the necessity of a regularly-educated minister to the constitution of a Christian society, that being unable to procure such a one, they either join in modes of worship which they themselves think to be idolatrous and impious, or by frequenting no public worship, do in fact cease to make any proper profession of Christianity at all. I hope that we shall, in time, grow wiser; and, as we reflect more upon the subject, shall consider the greatness of the evil, and apply the proper remedy for it.*

What is it but superstition, or habits originally formed by superstition, that has made the service of regular ministers to be deemed so very necessary, that if any minister be indisposed, or necessarily absent from his place, the congregation should either engage the services of another minister, or not meet for public worship at all? No such idea would have occurred in the primitive age of the church. The weekly assemblies of Christians did not then depend upon the presence of any one person of their society, or any number of them. A regular Christian church ought to be a standing body, and to keep up its weekly meetings for prayer and their common edification, independently of any circumstance of this kind. There ought to be a sufficient number of substitutes for every duty and office: and nothing can be more easy in any society, if it consist of persons capable of reading only.

If the Scriptures only were read in Christian societies, and the members of them edified themselves by singing, they would meet to very good purpose. But in this age, the

* See Vol. II. pp. 414—416.

most excellent discourses are easily procured, suited to the taste of any Christian society, and also prayers as proper for the purpose of Christian worship, as any you can reasonably expect from your ministers. And it is certainly great weakness not to be able to join in such prayers, truly excellent in themselves, merely because they are recited out of a book, or by a person not regularly educated. What is the Lord's Prayer, but a form, either recited from a book, or repeated from memory? And it is to be hoped you are not less devout during the recitation of this prayer, than in any other part of the service of the Lord's day.

I am far from denying the use of learned and able ministers in Christian churches. I wish there were more than there are, in all places where they could be maintained, or where they could maintain themselves with respect. For living instructors are, in many respects, preferable to dead ones. But the living instructions of dead men are certainly preferable to none. What are the Scriptures, but the writings of men who are now dead, but who, *though dead*, may be said *still to speak* to us?

But where there are regular ministers, there is much work to be done in Christian societies, if we consider the proper uses of them, as explained before, for which ministers are by no means, in general, the best qualified; especially if they be dependent, as they commonly are, upon the people for their support. I mean the truly Christian duties of admonition and reproof, and the disagreeable, but sometimes necessary, business of excluding unworthy members. And certainly a Christian society is not such a thing as that any person who pleases, may say that he belongs to it, and no one has a right to say that he does not, though, under that character, he does whatever he chooses. It is a prostitution of our own characters, as Christians, to suffer such things.

This important work of admonition, when persons begin to relax in their conduct (in which case it is most useful) can only be done with any prospect of success, by persons who are in habits of friendship and society with the person to be admonished, and who have some natural influence over him, which may not happen to be the case with ministers. Nay, from their studious and retired mode of life, which is generally allowed to suit their character, they are often the last persons to hear of such things; and this is a reason for their not being expected to interfere in this business, without regard to their dependent situation.

Now, how valuable a provision would it be in every con-

gregation, especially one in which there should be numbers of young people, to have some of the most discreet members of the society, and who, on account of their age, character, or fortune, should have the most natural influence in it, to consider it as their *proper business*, either to admonish such persons whose conduct they thought required particular attention, or to look out for some other person, who, according to the nature of the particular case, might be more likely to do it with effect; or who, if they perceived any master of a family to neglect the instruction of his children, or to be inattentive to the good conduct of his servants, should consider it as their duty to admonish him on the subject. We see through life, that what is equally every person's business, is, in fact, never done by any person.

What greater attention also might it not be expected that both young persons and their parents would give to their conduct, when they considered themselves as members of a society in which there were persons, whose proper duty it was to watch over them, and admonish them! There are many masters of families who would think themselves happy in having such an aid to their own authority. Besides, the known constitution of such a society would, in many cases, do the business of itself, without any actual interference of the elders; as all persons would naturally be careful to give less cause of reproof, when they knew that, if it was given, the reproof might certainly be expected.

Let the minister be considered as one of this body of elders, and be expected to serve the congregation in this way, as well as by his public instructions, whenever he shall have opportunity; but by no means let it be considered as a duty incumbent upon him only. This seems to be the idea at present, as far as such services are expected at all. But if you consider his situation, you must be sensible that it is laying a burden upon him, to which he is altogether unequal.

There have, indeed, been times and circumstances, in which single ministers, independent in fortune, and with a knowledge of human nature and of the world, not commonly to be expected of persons in their situation, and when the respect for the ministerial character was greater than it is now, were sufficient for this work, and exercised a paternal care and authority over a whole congregation; but those times, and those men, are no more, though they are as much wanted as ever. Younger men have succeeded them in their nominal capacity, but it was naturally impossible that

they should succeed to their authority and influence. Now, what is wanting for this purpose, is a pastoral care and authority that shall never die, depending upon persons whose numbers may be constantly kept up: for then their authority and use will be permanent.

If now, I were asked, what I should think might be done by such a society as this, who were sensible that all the proper benefits of a Christian society were not enjoyed by them, in consequence of not having kept up to the original constitution of a Christian church, as described in the writings of the apostles; I would take the liberty to answer, that, in a society of this extent, ten or a dozen persons might be chosen annually by the rest, with the style and characters of *elders*, that they should meet occasionally, to consult about any thing that occurred to them for the good of the society; and when any thing happened that they deemed to be worthy of their interference, they should settle among themselves how to act in it to the best advantage.

If I were farther asked, what kind of business I would wish them more particularly to attend to, I would answer, that, besides what may be collected from what has been already advanced, there is one business of obvious utility, in which they might interpose their advice and admonition with the greatest effect, and with very little danger of giving offence, or incurring censure; and that is, giving a proper kind of attention to the business of *catechising*, as now established in this congregation; as I presume that, from your experience, you are sufficiently sensible of the utility of it, and are desirous to have it kept up in future time, at least in the junior classes. For, with respect to the higher class, consisting of young men and young women of full age, it will perhaps be always best to have it considered as quite voluntary, both on the part of the teacher and the pupils. But that kind of instruction which may always be given to persons under fifteen or sixteen years of age, while they are wholly dependent on their parents, should be considered as indispensable. There will, therefore, be always the greatest propriety in your elders receiving from the minister who catechises, the names of all that attend those two classes, and in admonishing the parents of those children who either do not attend at all, or attend irregularly; and this can hardly be taken amiss by any person. Let it not be considered as at all incumbent upon the minister to look out for proper pupils. It should be deemed enough for him if he do his duty when they do attend.

But if it was once the established rule of the place, that all the children and young persons belonging to it were expected to attend these catechetical lectures, your elders would soon have very little trouble about it. With a little assistance of this kind at the first, the constitution itself will gain its own object. If you should think proper to appoint the elders now recommended, and they should, at first, take nothing upon them more than this duty, I should think the appointment would answer a very valuable purpose. Your latest posterity would thank you for it. They might act afterwards, in other cases, as their own prudence should direct them. It is not at all to be apprehended at this day, that they would attempt too much. The extreme of *negligence* is much more to be feared than that of *exertion*.

Some of you may say, that the *novelty* of what is now proposed (though in fact it is the revival of an ancient institution) will offend many. I answer, that nothing of this kind can be done without the entire approbation of the society, that is, of a great majority of it; and if you be wise, you will not be moved by the objections of a few. Besides, the mere number of a society, supposing this to be affected by such a measure, is a poor object of pride. It is the good internal state of any society, and its effectually answering the ends of it, that is the proper object of pride, if the word ought to be used on this occasion.

Besides, in one way, the experiment has been sufficiently tried. How are the congregations of rational Dissenters kept up in their present undisciplined state? To judge by appearances, we run no great risk of losing any thing by a change of measures. Seeing, then, to what many of our congregations are reduced, in point of numbers, in the course of the last half century, let us take warning in time. And, happily the remedy is easy, and in fact, nothing *new*. For, besides that it is only the original constitution of Christian churches, that I now wish to re-establish, a regular church discipline was always practised, both by the *Presbyterians* and *Independents*, at the time of their separation from the Established Church, though (for the reasons which I have explained at large in my *Essay on Church Discipline*) it has grown into disuse. However, while it subsisted, it had many good effects, and we now certainly feel the want of it.

Other Christian societies have still a regular discipline, and some of them flourish chiefly by means of it, even

though it is by no means so perfect as might be wished. The *Quakers* have no provision for any thing that we should call *instruction*, and yet the most valuable end of Christian societies, namely, an effectual restraint upon vice, is gained among them by discipline only. Let us join our advantages to theirs, and make an experiment of the result. It will be easy to revert to what we now are, if we should find the alteration at all inconvenient.

It may be said, that the election of regular officers may excite *emulation*. But is every degree of that disposition a real evil? The office of *elder* appears to have been eagerly wished for in the time of the apostles, and yet *Paul* encouraged the desire of it. Whatever is capable of producing evil, is likewise capable of producing good; and with prudence and good sense, it may produce little but what is good. Where Christianity is concerned, and the object contended for (if there should be any thing that can be called *contention* in the case) is no worldly emolument, but a place of real duty and responsibility, and what will, in its own nature, be an obligation to greater strictness in a man's own conduct, no great evil is to be apprehended. The wealth and the power which corrupted the elders in former times, are entirely out of the question with us; and in all cases when the cause ceases to operate, the effects are not to be dreaded. I am afraid you will find more readiness to decline, than to court, such preferment as this.

As a motive to this particular society to adopt what is now recommended, let me add, that you have already distinguished yourselves by several things, which I hope you will always think much to your honour; and in consequence of which, you are an object of emulation to other congregations, as in the example you have set of *a standing library* for the use of your young persons, and especially in the example of more *general* and more *early communion* than has been usual among Dissenters, and which, from the progress which has been already made, will soon, I hope, become universal among you. And from this, connected, as I would wish to have it, with the regular instruction of all the children and youth belonging to you, we cannot but expect the greatest advantage. Let us, then, improve upon the example that we are now setting to others. It is our duty, as societies, as well as individuals, to *provoke to love and to good works;* and the good that you will by this means do to others, and to posterity, namely, by your example and

indirect influence, will, in some measure, be considered as effected by you, no less than what is done by your own direct endeavours.

To conclude. It is our duty, however, as your ministers, to propose to you whatever we think to be for your honour and advantage. It is your duty to hear, to judge, and to decide; and remember, it is not our interest, but yours, that is the object of it, and not yours only, but that of your posterity. To add what I observed when I proposed to you the lectures that are now established for the instruction of your youth: "It is my ardent wish, not only that you continue to be what you now are, a respectable society of Christians, Protestants, and Dissenters, but that you should continually improve in whatever can justly entitle you to respect, that is, in a thorough knowledge of what relates to your profession as Christians, Protestants, and Dissenters, and in a conduct in life becoming and recommending that profession. More especially is it to be wished, that sufficient provision may be now made, and before it be too late, that an attachment to those great interests may not die with yourselves, but that you may have the satisfaction of seeing a still more perfect knowledge of them, and a proportionably greater zeal for them, in the generations that will come after you."*

As a general motive to exert ourselves in every thing relating to our profession as Christians, let us habitually consider the great object of our profession, the revelation of a future life; and study, above all things, to approve ourselves the faithful servants of an *absent Master;* that when he shall return, and take an account of all his servants, we may be found *watching*, and especially *strengthening the things that* were good, *that were ready to die.* Thus shall we secure his approbation, and what is the end of all, the approbation of *his Father and our Father, and of his God and our God.*

* Dr. Priestley's happy manner of promoting this great object is thus described by a near observer: "With what skill and diligence did he apply himself to train up the youth of the congregations to which he was Minister, to the knowledge of the Bible, and the love of it; to understand the Christian doctrine, and become acquainted with the Christian history, in order that they might practise the more exactly and extensively the Christian morals! I could, from my own knowledge and observation, give a long and particular account of his ingenious methods, his familiar address, his invitation of question and remark, his easy condescension, which won the affections of the youth who attended upon his instructions." *Sermon* on Dr. Priestley's Death, "by John Edwards." 1804, p. 41. Mr. Edwards, who was admired as an ingenious and eloquent preacher, died September 4, 1808, aged 40. See *Mon. Repos.* III. pp. 517, 562, 642, 643, 693—700.

The Importance and Extent of Free Inquiry in Matters of Religion:

A

SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE THE

Congregations of the Old and New Meeting

OF

PROTESTANT DISSENTERS,

AT

BIRMINGHAM, NOVEMBER 5, 1785.

[First published in 1785.]

MATT. xiii. 9:

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

IN these words our Lord several times addressed his audience, in order to summon their utmost attention to his doctrine. It was a call to make use of their reason, in a case in which it was of the greatest consequence to apply it, and in which they were likewise capable of applying it with the greatest effect, viz. the investigation of religious truth. *Hear and understand*, is another of his modes of calling the attention of his audience to the instruction that he gave them. And when he thought them deficient in their attention to his doctrine, and they did not appear to understand what he laid before them, he was not backward even in his reproaches on that account. "Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand?" his language that he once made use of, *Matt.* xv. 16, 17; evidently implying some degree of surprise and displeasure. And even in a case of considerable difficulty, viz. the right application of scripture prophecies, he said to the two disciples going to *Emmaus*, (*Luke* xxiv. 25,) "O fools, and slow of heart to believe, all that the prophets have spoken!"

The apostles continued the same earnest addresses to the reason of their converts, and *Paul* in particular, gave the greatest exercise to the understandings of his hearers and

readers, by very abstruse argumentation on subjects relating to religion. His Epistles to the *Romans*, to the *Galatians*, and to the *Hebrews*, are chiefly argumentative; and those to the *Corinthians*, and some others, are very much so. For, after the death of our Saviour, new cases had occurred, and new difficulties had arisen, for which the instructions he had given them were not sufficient. And had the apostles continued to live to the present day, other cases would, no doubt, have occurred, in which their own reasoning powers, and those of their disciples, would have found continual exercise.

Indeed, it seems to be the design of Providence that the present state should be a theatre of constant exercise and discipline, and that not of our passions only, but also of our understandings, that we may make continual advances in knowledge as well as in virtue, to prepare us, no doubt, for our proper sphere of action in a future world; in which, we may assure ourselves, we shall find abundant exercise; as for the moral virtues that we acquire here, so also for that habit of patient inquiry, and close investigation of truth, and likewise that candour with respect to those that differ from us, which it is our duty to acquire and cultivate here below.

Man is a creature whose distinguishing excellence is the reason which God has given him, no less than his capacity for moral virtues. The perfection of man, therefore, must consist as well in the improvement of his reason, and the acquisition of knowledge, as in the attainment of all moral virtue. We should, then, always keep our attention awake to every interesting subject of discussion; and whenever religious truth is directly or indirectly concerned, imagine that we hear our Saviour himself calling out to us, and saying, *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

The subject of *free inquiry*, I am well aware, is a very trite one, and especially as one of the usual topics of the fifth of November, on which it is customary to call the attention of *Protestants* to the use of their reason in matters of religion, in order to vindicate the principles of the Reformation; and also farther to assert our liberty of dissenting from the established religion of this country. This has been done so often, that many persons may think it a worn-out and useless topic. They may think that the Reformation has been abundantly vindicated, and that now we have nothing to do but to rejoice in that liberty in which the exertions of our ancestors, and the favour of Divine Providence, have made us free. *Dissenters* also may think the

principles of their dissent from the establishment of their country sufficiently vindicated, and that now we have nothing to do but joyfully to acquiesce in our great liberty; only being ready to oppose all attempts that may be made to encroach upon it.

This, however, is the language of those who think they have acquired all useful religious knowledge; whereas, it is probable, that this will never be the situation of man, not even in a future world, and much less in this. In nature we see no bounds to our inquiries. One discovery always gives hints of many more, and brings us into a wider field of speculation. Now, why should not this be, in some measure, the case with respect to knowledge of a moral and religious kind. Is the compass of religious knowledge so small, as that any person, however imperfectly educated, may comprehend the whole, and without much trouble? This may be the notion of such as read or think but little on the subject; but of what value can such an opinion be?

If we look back into ecclesiastical history, (which is itself a study no less useful than it is immense, and despised by none but those who are ignorant of it,) we shall see that every age, and almost every year, has had its peculiar subjects of inquiry. As one controversy has been determined, or sufficiently agitated, others have always arisen; and I will venture to say there never was a time in which there were more, or more interesting objects of discussion before us, than there are at present. And it is in vain to flatter ourselves with the prospect of seeing an end to our labours, and of having nothing to do but to sit down in the pleasing contemplation of all religious truth, and reviewing the intricate mazes through which we have happily traced the progress of every error.

If, indeed, we confine ourselves to things that are *necessary to salvation*, we may stop whenever we please, and may even save ourselves the trouble of any inquiry or investigation at all; because nothing is absolutely necessary to acceptance with God, and future happiness, in some degree, besides the conscientious practice of the moral duties of life. "What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" [*Micah* vi. 8.] But, certainly, we may mislead ourselves if we restrict our inquiries by this rule, as, according to it, Christianity itself may be said to be unnecessary; for do any of us think that a virtuous Heathen will not be saved? Paul says, that they who are without the law of Moses shall

be judged without that law. They have the law of nature and of conscience, and will be judged by that. But, notwithstanding this, he thought it a great privilege to be a Jew, and a greater still, as it certainly is, to be a Christian; and there were questions relating to Christianity to which he thought it proper to give his own closest attention, and to invite the attention of others. The manner in which he addresses the *Galatians*, the *Corinthians*, and the Christians of other churches, on the subject of *false doctrine*, is equal, in point of energy, with the language of our Saviour, *he that hath ears to hear, let him hear;* and that of the apostle *John*, in whose time error had spread wider, and taken deeper root, is still stronger. Do not these great examples, then, justify the most vigilant attention that we can now give to the purity of Christian doctrine?

As new errors and mistakes are continually arising, it is of importance that these be corrected, even to keep the ground that we have already got; and it may well be presumed that the great corruption in doctrine, discipline and worship which began in the very age of the apostles, and which kept advancing for the space of near fourteen hundred years afterwards, may furnish matter for the laborious and spirited inquiries of a later period than ours. We have seen, indeed, the *dawn* of a reformation, but much remains to the light of *perfect day;* and there is nothing that we can now allege as a plea for discontinuing our researches, that might not have been said with equal plausibility at the time by *Wickliffe*, by *Luther*, or by later reformers, who stopped far short of the progress which you who now hear me have made. We think that they all left the Reformation very imperfect, and why may not our posterity think the same concerning us? What peculiar right have we to say to the spirit of reformation, *So far shalt thou go and no farther.*

Luther and *Calvin* reformed many abuses, especially in the discipline of the church, and also some gross corruptions in doctrine; but they left other things, of far greater moment, just as they found them. They disclaimed the worship of saints and angels, but they retained the worship of Jesus Christ, which led the way to it, which had the same origin, and which is an equal infringement of the honour due to the supreme God, who has declared that he will not give his glory to another. Nay, the authority of the names of those reformers who did not see this and other great errors, now serves to strengthen and confirm them; for those doctrines of original sin, predestination, atonement, and the divinity

of Christ, which deserve to be numbered among the grossest of all errors, are even often distinguished by the appellation of *the doctrines of the Reformation*, merely because they were not reformed by those who have got the name of *the reformers;* as if no others could have a right to it but themselves; whereas, excepting the doctrine of *atonement*, (which, in its full extent, was an error that originated with the reformers themselves, who were led into it by an immoderate opposition to the popish doctrine of merit,) they are, in fact, the doctrines of the Church of *Rome*, which *Luther* and *Calvin* left just as they found.

It was great merit in them to go so far as they did, and it is not *they*, but *we* who are to blame, if their authority induce us to go no farther. We should rather imitate them in the boldness and spirit with which they called in question, and rectified, so many long-established errors; and, availing ourselves of their labours, make farther progress than they were able to do. Little reason have we to allege their name, authority, and example, when they did a great deal, and we do nothing at all. In this, we are not imitating *them*, but those who opposed and counteracted them, willing to keep things as they were, among whom were many excellent characters, whose apprehensions at that day were the very same with those of many very good and quiet persons at present, viz. the fear of *moving foundations*, and overturning Christianity itself. Their fears, we are now all sensible, were groundless, and why may not those of the present age be so too?

Dissenters, who have no creeds dictated to them by any civil governors, have, nevertheless, at this day, no less need of such admonitions as these than members of established churches, because they may have acquired as blind an attachment to the systems in which they were educated as the members of any establishment whatever, and may be as averse to any farther improvement. Indeed a similar temper is necessarily produced in similar circumstances, while human nature is the same in us all; and, therefore, a person educated a Dissenter may be as much *a bigot* as any person educated a Churchman, or a Papist; and if he now be what he was brought up to, the probability certainly is, that had he been educated differently, his prejudices would have been no less strong, though entirely different; so that the rigid Dissenter would have been as rigid a Papist or a Churchman.

No person whose opinions are not the result of his own serious inquiry can have a right to say that he is a Dissenter,

or any thing else, *on principle;* and no man can be absolutely sure of this whose present opinions are the same with those that he was taught, though he may think, and be right in thinking, that he sees sufficient reason for them, and retains them on conviction. This, however, is all that can be expected of any man; for it would be most absurd for a man to adopt new opinions, opinions entertained by no person besides himself, merely for the sake of proving that he has actually thought for himself. But still, thinking as others have thought, and for reasons which others have given, is no *proof* of a man having thought for himself, and therefore will not authorize his censuring of others. Such a person *may* have the true spirit of inquiry, he may have exerted it, and have found the truth; but he is incapable of giving that satisfactory *evidence* of it which can be given by one whose present sentiments are different from those in which he was educated, and which he could not have learned but from his own researches.

How few, then, of those of you who were educated Dissenters can have a right to say that you would have been Dissenters if you had *not* been so educated! It is more than I would presume to say concerning myself. If those persons who now dislike the spirit of innovation were to go back in history, and place themselves in every age of reformation, still censuring that spirit which always gave offence in its day, (being always the rebellion of *a few* against the authority of *the many*,) they could not stop till they came to the Heathenism of our barbarous ancestors; for it was the bold spirit of inquiry that made them Christians.

Let all those who acquiesce in any system in which they were educated, or which they have learned from others, consider that, in censuring more modern innovators, they are censuring the *spirit* and *example* of the very persons whose opinions they have adopted, and of whose name they make their boast; and that if it had not been for that very spirit which they now censure, only exerted a century or two ago, their own opinions would have been very different from what they now are. They ought, therefore, to respect the *principle*, even though it should lead some into error. If the spirit of inquiry that carries some to *Socinianism* be wrong, that which carries others to *Arianism* is no less so; and if *Arminius* is to be condemned for abandoning the doctrine of Calvin, *Calvin* himself must be condemned for abandoning the doctrines of Popery. It is *the spirit of inquiry*, which, if error be established, necessarily leads to

innovation, that every man who ranks himself with any class of Christians now existing, must commend in some person or other; and if it was really commendable in the person whose opinions he adopts, it cannot be censurable in the person whose opinions he does not choose to adopt. The same spirit of inquiry is in itself equally commendable, or equally censurable in all, and, whether it lead to truth, or to error.

It will be said, Is it not possible for the spirit of inquiry and innovation to be carried too far? Does liberty never degenerate into licentiousness? Admitting this, who is the proper judge in the case when all are equally *parties?* The *Papist* will say that the *Protestant* has gone too far; the *Calvinists* will say that the *Arminians* are to blame; Arminians will condemn the *Arians*, and the *Arians* the *Unitarians;** and even some Unitarians may condemn those of their body, who, differing from them in some respects, have not as yet got, but may hereafter get, some other name.

In fact, there is no reason to be alarmed at all in the case. Truth will always have an infinite advantage over error, if free scope be given to inquiry. It is very little advantage that any superiority of ability can give to the cause of error, and cannot be of long continuance; not to say that the probability must always be, that a man of superior ability will discover the truth sooner than one of inferior talents; industry and all other qualities being equal between them.

But the consideration that will perhaps contribute most to allay the apprehensions of serious and well-intentioned persons, with respect to all theological controversies, is, that nothing on which future happiness depends is concerned in any of them. Much more than has yet been called in question may be given up without abandoning Christianity; and every thing that has yet been done towards stripping our

* Of this *distinction*, so frequent with my Author, I confess myself unable to discover the justice or propriety. What modern authority, however respectable, can be sufficient, for instance, to despoil such an *Unitarian* confessor as *Emlyn*, of *that worthy name* by which he distinguished himself, and was always called, and which, in his age, was, I apprehend, uniformly employed to describe a worshipper of one God in one person, whatever he might believe respecting our Lord's *pre-existence*, or his agency in the creation, redemption, or government of the world. See Emlyn's *Life and Works*, I. *passim; Theol. Repos.* IV. pp. 20, 71, 370, 371; *Yates on Wardlaw*, p. 65; *Sequel*, p. 11.

On this subject it has been well stated, that "the humanity of Christ is not essential to Unitarianism;" that "such limitation is inconsistent with the etymology and meaning of the term, and its historical use;" that "Dr. Price was an Unitarian as well as Dr. Priestley;" and, that "so is every worshipper of the Father only, whether he believe that Christ was created before all worlds, or first existed when born of Mary." Fox's *Lectures*, 1819, (*Lect.* iv.) 8vo. pp. 91, 92.

religion of its foreign incumbrances, has contributed to make many value it the more; and consequently, by giving it a firmer hold on men's understanding and belief, tends to give it a greater influence over their affections and practice.

There are, likewise, some other considerations, by means of which those persons who are not themselves much given to speculation, and who are apt to be alarmed by the suggestions of others, may relieve themselves from the fears they entertain on these occasions: one is, that no principle or tenet is really dangerous that does not affect men's belief in the righteous moral government of God, and a state of rewards and punishments hereafter; because this is that religious principle which has the greatest influence on the conduct of men. Other principles, indeed, have an effect, in contributing to make us regard our Governor and Judge, and the maxims of his administration, with more satisfaction, and therefore may make religious obedience more pleasing, and they deserve our zeal and attachment on that account. Other principles, again, tend to make our religion approve itself to the reason of mankind, by removing from it what is manifestly absurd, or highly improbable and revolting; and therefore may recommend Christianity to those who are at present prejudiced against it, and they deserve a large portion of our zeal on that account. But still the great thing, with respect to the professor of Christianity himself, is his firm belief in a righteous moral government, and a future state of retribution, because these are the things that chiefly influence men's conduct.

In reality, there cannot be any better rule of judging in this case than that of our Saviour, [*Matt.* vii. 20,] "By their fruits ye shall know them." Consider, then, the tempers and conduct of those persons whose opinions are said to be dangerous. Are they worse than other persons? Have they less piety towards God, or less good-will to men; or are they more indulgent to their appetites and passions? If this cannot be said of them, but, on the contrary, their conduct be as unexceptionable and exemplary as that of other Christians, assure yourselves that there is no more real danger in their principles, than in those of others. They cannot be bad principles with which men lead godly, righteous, and sober lives.

I do not, however, desire you to be determined by the observation of a single person, or of a few persons; because there may be causes of their good conduct, independent of

their principles, as there may be causes of bad conduct in those who hold good principles. But observe the general character of the sect, or denomination, whose principles are censured; and if it be not worse than that of others, assure yourselves that, whatever may be the vices or virtues of individuals, the general principles of the sect are not more unfavourable to virtue than those of other Christians; and therefore, that there is nothing in them that ought to give you any alarm.

But if, independent of practical consequences, you consider speculative principles only, and all your fears be for *Christianity*, it should be considered that every man is a Christian who believes the divine mission of Christ, and, consequently, the truth of his religion. And, for the reason given before, the only essential article of his religion is, the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. Who Christ himself is, personally considered, is not, of itself, of any consequence, but only whether he be sufficiently authorized, by *the God of truth*, to teach what he did teach in his name. If such doctrines be taught concerning Christ, personally considered, as men of sense will not readily believe, if it be insisted on that he is Almighty God, the maker of the world, or any thing else that will seem to be either impossible or highly improbable, (by which many persons may be indisposed to receive Christianity, and especially the great bodies of *Jews* and *Mahometans*, who keep strictly to that most important doctrine of *the unity of God,)* every rational Christian ought, on that account, as well as others, to exert himself to refute such notions, and to prevent the spread of them. But still we ought to bear in mind, that any man is entitled to the appellation of *a Christian* who believes that Christ (whether he was himself God or man, or something between God and man) had a commission from God, that he died and rose again; and who, in consequence of it, expects a general resurrection and a life of retribution to come.

But should free inquiry lead to the destruction of Christianity itself, it ought not, on that account, to be discontinued; for we can only wish for the prevalence of Christianity on the supposition of its being *true;* and if it fall before the influence of free inquiry, it can only do so in consequence of its not being true. But every man who is himself a serious believer in Christianity, must have the most perfect confidence in its truth. He can have no doubt of its being able to stand the test of the most rigorous

examination, and consequently he can have no motive to be unwilling to submit it to that test. None can well be enemies to free inquiry but those who, not believing Christianity, or at least strongly suspecting that it may not be true, yet wish to support it for some private and interested considerations; like those who lived by the trade of making shrines for the goddess Diana, who were interested in the support of her worship at all events, whether they themselves believed in her divinity or not, because by *that craft they got their wealth*. But this is an argument that cannot much affect any, besides members of civil establishments of religion. You, my brethren, have no interest whatever in the support of Christianity, if it be false; and your ministers very little. We, therefore, as Dissenters, shall be absolutely inexcusable if we be not friends to free inquiry in its utmost extent, and if we do not give the most unbounded scope to the use of our reason in matters of religion. It is the great principle on which our cause rests, and without which it can never be worth supporting at all.

By all means, then, be so far consistent as *Christians*, as *Protestants*, and as *Dissenters*, as to give the greatest encouragement to free inquiry in matters of religion. Do you, who have leisure and capacity, study the subject of religion, the nature of its evidences, and every circumstance relating to it. No subjects of inquiry or speculation, within the reach of the human faculties, are so great and interesting as those which, in the most distant manner, relate to the revelation of the will of God to men, respecting our conduct here, and our expectations hereafter. The ultimate object of the whole scheme gives a dignity to comparatively little things belonging to it; and no studies are, in their nature, capable of becoming more pleasing and satisfying to the mind than those of theology. For this I may venture to appeal to the experience of all those who, in consequence of having a taste for these studies, as well as others, and of having made real proficiency in both, are the only competent judges in the case. Their being the chosen studies of *Newton* and *Locke*, for the greater and more valuable part of their lives, clearly shews that they considered them as superior to those of mathematics and natural philosophy in the one case, and of metaphysics and various other liberal pursuits, in the other. Compared with this testimony, so emphatically given by the actual employment of their time, how contemptible is the opinion of men whose studies have been confined to polite literature, natural science, or that

of men of the world, who cannot pretend to any knowledge of the subject on which they pass their hasty censures! You who have fortune, but little leisure or capacity for such inquiries yourselves, at least, encourage them in others. Give assistance to their labours, and you will have a better right to enjoy the fruits of them, though you may not be qualified, in any other respect, to contribute to their success.

Do you in general, who are private members of Christian societies, be, at least, so far the friends of free inquiry, as to throw no obstructions in the way of it. Allow your ministers the liberty that you take yourselves, and take no umbrage if, in consequence of giving more attention to matters of theology than you have leisure for, they should entertain opinions different from yours, provided that your agreement on the whole be such as that their services are useful and edifying to you. After a laborious, and perhaps hazardous course of inquiry, of the difficulties of which you can hardly be aware, it is no great hardship upon you to give them, at least, a dispassionate and attentive hearing. They cannot *force* any opinions upon you. You will still have the power of judging for yourselves; and without hearing, you cannot have even the means of forming a right judgment. And where an agreement cannot be had, (and few persons, who really think for themselves, will agree in *all* things,) you may exercise that mutual candour which is of more value than any agreement in speculation.

If your ministers be men of sense, and have any knowledge of human nature, they will not trouble you, from such a place as this, with speculations into which you cannot enter, or the discussion of questions that are not of some importance to our common Christianity. But you may easily suppose that, giving more attention to speculative religion than you have leisure to do, they may see the importance of certain articles in a stronger light than you will at first be aware of; and that will justify them to themselves, and ought to justify them to you, if they propose those articles with such evidence as strikes their minds in their favour, and with a zeal which they may think they deserve. It is indeed their duty, in the sight of God, to inculcate upon you whatever they shall think to be of importance to you, as members of Christian societies, whether you receive it well or ill.

There are many things which they may think to be highly interesting *in speculation*, and proper for your consideration

in your closets, which they would not think of proposing promiscuously from the pulpit, not being of sufficient importance, and the minds of all not being sufficiently prepared for them. But there are some errors of a speculative nature, such as those respecting the unity of God, and the equity of his moral government, which have taken deep root among common Christians, and which are perpetually inculcated from other pulpits, with respect to which it becomes us to oppose zeal to zeal, and every man who has *ears to hear*, should be called upon to *hear and understand;* because every man who has ears to hear, and the most common understanding, may be made to see the absurdity and the mischievous consequences of such doctrines. The minds, therefore, of the commonest people ought to be enlightened, and their zeal excited, with respect to them. Let it appear that we, as well as others, despise what we think to be despicable, and abhor what we think to be shocking.

Let those, on the other hand, who are bold in speculation, bear with those who are not so, especially those who are in years, and who have not been much in the habit of diligent inquiry. God does not give the same disposition to every man; nor, indeed, does the purpose of his providence admit of it. Long prejudices are also always, or at least generally, to be treated with tenderness. Besides, as it is happy for the cause of truth that some should be forward in speculation, it is no less happy that others should be backward to receive new opinions; as, in consequence of this, every thing is more properly canvassed; and it is only after a due course of discussion, in which every objection shall be brought forth, that there can be any probability that the reception of any truth will be lasting. A truth that has never been opposed, cannot acquire that firm and unwavering assent, which is given to that which has stood the test of a rigorous examination.

As we call upon every man that has ears, to *hear*, that is, to *judge*, we must be prepared patiently to bear with the result of that judgment, whatever it is. If we invite examination and discussion, we should take the consequences of it, without complaining. If the cause for which we contend be a good one, it will stand its ground; and if otherwise, we ourselves ought to rejoice in the fall of it.

To conclude, whether in searching after truth, or in judging of it, let us give one another all the aid and assistance that we can; remembering that we are all frail and fallible creatures, liable to mistakes, and to faults more dangerous

than any mistakes. Let it, therefore, be our greatest care "to provoke unto love and to good works," to "exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of *us* be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." [*Heb.* x. 24, iii. 13.]

With respect to *opinions*, the time is coming that will try every man's work what it is, whether we are now building "upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets," with suitable and durable materials, or such as will not bear the fire. And, with respect both to speculation and practice, let it be our great object so to acquit ourselves here below, in the absence of our Lord, that when he shall return, and take an account of his servants, we may "be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless," and "not to be ashamed before him at his coming." [2 *Peter* iii. 14; 1 *John* ii. 23.]*

THE DOCTRINE

OF

Divine Influence on the Human Mind,

CONSIDERED, IN A

SERMON,

Preached at the Ordination of the Rev. Messrs. Thomas and John Jervis, in 1779.†

——— The first Almighty Cause
Acts not by partial, but by gen'ral Laws.

POPE.

[First published in 1779.]

PREFACE.

THE doctrine advanced in this discourse is by no means *new*, and the interpretations I have given of those texts which at first sight seem to be most unfavourable to it, are, in fact, the same that are given by *Grotius*, and other divines and commentators of the greatest repute. It ought not, therefore, to give any particular offence. And yet, because

* For the "Reflections on the present State of Free Inquiry in this Country," annexed to this Sermon in 1787, see the *Appendix*.

† See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 54.

the doctrine is here, perhaps, distinctly laid down, more largely illustrated, and urged with less caution and reserve, than, I believe, it has been hitherto done, it is not impossible but that it may excite more attention; and that to many, who have been long accustomed to a different view of things, it may give more alarm, than it did while the views exhibited of it were but transient and indistinct. I shall, therefore, make a few observations on the nature and consequences of it, that no persons may complain that they were not fully apprized of the whole extent of what is proposed to them.

This doctrine of the exclusion of all *immediate agency of the Deity on the minds of men*, restraining them from evil, or disposing them to good, and of his doing this by no other means than the natural influence of proper instructions and motives, certainly goes to the root of the grossest and most dangerous delusions that the Christian world has, in all ages, been subject to. It precludes the bold pretensions of all empirics in religion, by whatever name they have been distinguished, with the vain hopes of all that are liable to be deluded by them; and it supplies the only basis of that practical religion, that is truly rational and safe. It is utterly incompatible with the very principle and ground of the doctrine of *sovereign and irresistible grace*, the possibility of *instantaneous conversion*, and, consequently, of any true and availing conversion at the latest hour of life. Let all those, therefore, who are attached to such notions, be apprized, that the doctrine contended for in this discourse, is exceedingly hostile to them. It is, however, a doctrine that, I am confident, the more it is examined, the more consonant it will appear to be to reason (that is, to all actual *appearances* and *facts)* and to the genuine sense of Scripture; and on this account I am satisfied, that their doctrine of a *new* and *miraculous birth* is altogether unscriptural and deceitful.

On the other hand, the doctrine that excludes all miraculous interpositions, is by no means inconsistent with the belief of a *particular providence*, or of an intended correspondence between all events that are coincident, or that have any relation to each other. For whether those coincidences which are ascribed to a particular providence, be brought about just at the time of the respective events, or were originally provided for in the general plan, the *design* is the very same. We equally acknowledge *the hand of God*, though we consider him as acting by the intervention of second causes. It is an uncontroverted maxim of the

schools, that *causa causæ est causa causati.* If, therefore, there be an intelligent Author of Nature, who fixed the laws of it, and put the whole complex frame in motion, whatever is the necessary result of this constitution, is to be ascribed to him.

On this account, however, it may be imagined that the doctrine of this discourse is properly *necessarian*, and, taken in its whole extent, true only on that hypothesis. I answer, so very great, important, and comprehensive, as the doctrine of *Philosophical Necessity*, in my idea of it, is, I believe there cannot be any valuable *moral truth* that does not connect and harmonize with it, if it do not directly imply it. There can be no plan of *moral government* that is not built upon it, and every thing that a philosopher understands by the terms *accountableness*, *praise* and *blame*, *reward* and *punishment*, &c., necessarily supposes it, and nothing that respects the *discipline of the mind* can have any meaning without it.

But though, speculatively considered, the doctrine of Necessity must make a part of every general system that is founded on truth, yet, at the same time, the doctrine of this particular discourse is no more *necessarian* than every thing that we preach and inculcate for the *moral good of men* is so; and therefore those who are not Necessarians, will find no greater difficulty in admitting the doctrine of this discourse in consistency with their peculiar principles, than any other tenet in religion or morals. With much more justice might it be said, that the doctrine of *Divine Prescience* is a necessarian doctrine, which, however, all who pretend to piety, and especially all who believe the Scriptures, *must* maintain; and the embarrassment they will be under on that subject, cannot be much greater than any that can arise in this case.

Whatever notion men may entertain of *divine* and *human agency*, there must be something to which they will give the appellation of the *usual*, or *established course of nature*, and, in some sense or other, they must ascribe this to God; for though the *decision of the will* be supposed to be independent of him, the *acting* in consequence of it, cannot be so. He must at least *permit*, *when he might prevent*, if he does not directly *appoint*, whatever comes to pass. Indeed, according to the doctrine of *Philosophical Liberty*, this course of nature must be a thing more evidently distinct from the direct interposition of the Deity, than upon the doctrine of Necessity, which ultimately ascribes all to God.

It must, therefore, be perfectly consistent with the prin-

ciples of those who are advocates for what they call *liberty*, to maintain, with me, that the work of conversion and reformation, is something that takes place according to the usual course of nature, whatever that be, and that it is not to be ascribed to any thing out of it; and they are at liberty to ascribe *the opening of the heart of Lydia*, and *the hardening of the heart of Pharaoh*, to the former, rather than to the latter of these causes, as much as myself; and accordingly, many of them have done so. Though, believing, as they do, that there are certain precincts, within which the human mind naturally acts without the controul of the Deity, they may be inclined to think that his *actual interference* may be sometimes necessary; and therefore they will be more easily reconciled to the notion of pretty frequent occasional, but properly, supernatural influences, than the Necessarian (who, as such, believes that nothing is without the sphere of a properly divine, though regular and constant influence) will choose to have recourse to.

All that the advocates for Philosophical Liberty can really object to me on this occasion, is, the sufficiency of the distinction between the *ordinary* and the *extraordinary* operation of the Divine Being, which is a thing altogether foreign to the proper subject of this discourse, and therefore does not require to be discussed in this place. I think I have considered it sufficiently elsewhere.

I may also be thought to have had in my eye, and to have *alluded* to, the doctrine of Necessity, in some parts of this discourse. This, I own, is very possible, and, unknown to myself, it may be the case with my other writings, even those that are the most foreign to the subject; because it is a doctrine that I wish always to keep in view, and what I would not willingly ever lose sight of. But this cannot be a *material* objection to any thing that I have advanced. The candid will find no difficulty in interpreting such incidental expressions (which the more sharp-sighted may think to look that way) according to their own sentiments, or substitute others in their places. Had not this objection been actually made to the discourse, I own I should have been far from thinking it necessary to have said any thing on the subject in this preface.

The doctrine of this discourse, in common with other great truths, and especially that of the doctrine of Necessity, will probably never be within the clear comprehension of the vulgar, so that it will always be unpopular; and, as in

all other such cases, it must also be expected, that the contrary doctrine will be maintained by some who rank with the *speculative* and the *learned*. In particular, Bishop Warburton in his "Doctrine of Grace, or the Office and Operation of the Holy Spirit,"* though he combats what he calls *fanatical pretences to Divine influence*, yet takes it for granted that the Spirit of God abides with the Church for ever, "in his office of Comforter, both in supporting the will, and in his office of enlightening or directing the understanding;" meaning, no doubt, some immediate agency of the Deity on the mind. This also seems to be the general opinion of Christians, who acquiesce in the most obvious meaning of Scripture language, and who do not give much attention to the *phenomena* and powers of the human mind. But, at the same time, it is not pretended by those who hold this doctrine, that there can be any *positive proof* of this kind of divine agency, since they acknowledge that the affections and resolutions dictated by it, are not to be distinguished from the natural operations of the mind. But is not this flying from one unsupported hypothesis to another, equally unsupported? Nay, those fanatics whom the bishop exposes, pretend to evident *facts* in support of their opinion; whereas, he does not pretend to be able to assign any fact at all in support of his. What must philosophers think of such an hypothesis as this!

No inconvenience will arise to the generality of Christians from confounding, as they will do, *primary* and *secondary* causes, the agency of God, and the operations of their own minds, and especially their occasionally overlooking second causes, so far as to ascribe every thing that is *good* immediately to God (which seems to have been the case with the pious writers of the Scriptures) provided they do not so far leave *themselves* out of the question, as to neglect the only effectual means of establishing themselves in virtue. It cannot be expected but that the generality of mankind will content themselves with the most *obvious appearances in nature*, and the generality of Christians with the most *literal interpretation of scripture language*. But let them not be offended if others, who give more attention to appearances, see in them what they do not, but what they may see is not unfavourable to piety and virtue. *By their fruits ye shall know men*, is the wise rule of our Saviour. Let us,

* "Vindicated from the Insults of Infidelity, and the Abuses of Fanaticism." 1762.

therefore, be upon our guard against judging from the *supposed tendencies* of things, when the *real* tendencies, and actual *effects*, cannot fail to manifest themselves in due time.*

SERMON.

MATT. xiii. 3—10:

And he spake many things unto them in parables; saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up. Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth, and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth. And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprung up, and choaked them. But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

IN this parable our Lord gives an account of the reception that his gospel would meet with in the world, according to the different characters of those to whom it would be proposed. It may, therefore, be considered as a prophecy; and it is a prophecy verified by all history, and, indeed, by the observation of every day; announcing to us, that the effects of religious truths, and of religious impressions of all kinds, depend upon the disposition of mind with which they are received; so that, though the doctrines of the gospel be

* As this Discourse relates to a capital article in *the history of the corruptions of Christianity*, to a mistake and a delusion, which arose chiefly, I believe, with the *Montanists*, but has entered deeply into every species of corrupted Christianity to the present time, I shall take this opportunity of informing my friends and the public, that the history which I have long proposed to write of all the material Corruptions of Christianity, has grown so much upon my hands, that I think proper to make it *a separate work*, and not a *continuation* of the *Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion*. Indeed, that work, already containing *a view of all the branches of natural religion, the evidences of revelation, and all the most important information we derive from it*, is sufficiently comprehensive and complete of itself. I therefore consider it as *closed;* and I give my friends this public assurance, that I shall not fail to keep in view the other work I have promised them, and for which I have long been collecting materials. I am afraid however, that, after all, I shall not be able to satisfy their expectations; but I hope that what I shall do may be of some use, till something more complete on the subject be done by others. I shall probably publish it in separate parts, as I may happen to have opportunities for completing any of them, without waiting till I can finish and arrange the whole, which is not a matter of much consequence. *(P.)* Addition to *Pref.* 1779.

the same things in themselves, the consequence of the general promulgation of them will be very various.

Our Lord seems to lay peculiar stress on the doctrine of this parable, by closing it with saying, *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear;* and if we properly attend to it, we shall find that it abounds with the most important instruction, both to those who preach the gospel, and those who hear it. At present I shall consider it in no more than one single point of view, endeavouring to illustrate and inculcate one important truth, plainly intimated to us in it, viz. that all the benefit we are authorized to expect from the gospel, arises from the natural effect that the great truths and motives of it are calculated to produce upon the mind; that the interposition of the Divine Being in the dispensation of the gospel, consists solely in imparting those truths, and suggesting those motives, and not at all in giving any supernatural efficacy to the truths or motives after they are presented.

Our Lord evidently compares himself, and his apostles, to persons who merely sow good seed, (which the earth could not bring forth of itself,) and this they are represented as scattering promiscuously, without distinction of places or soils, which were just as nature, or previous circumstances, had made them. Consequently, where the soil was previously well-disposed to receive it, the produce was ample; but where it was, on any account, indisposed, the produce was insignificant, or none at all.

The preachers of the gospel, here exhibited in the character of husbandmen, are not represented as altering the quality or condition of the soil itself; and therefore we find that the gospel was sometimes a savour of life, and at other times, of death. So though it is elsewhere compared to *light*, which is generally a very welcome thing, yet some are said to *hate this light, because their deeds were evil.* [*John* iii. 19, 20.] Also, though the evidences of the divine mission of Christ were fairly and equally proposed to all; yet our Saviour says, [*John* vii. 17,] that they only who *do the will of God*, that is, those who are upright and previously well-disposed, "shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." Others would be so prejudiced, that the strongest evidence would not be properly attended to, and therefore could not have its proper effect; insomuch, that he expressly tells these bigotted Jews, [*John* v. 40,] that *they would not come to him, that they might have life;* and applying to them a prophecy of *Isaiah*, he represents them as

so far infatuated by vicious prejudices, that it was *not in their power* to receive the gospel. And unless they had had better dispositions of mind, which he did not pretend to give them, it was really and truly impossible.

In another parable, our Lord compares human nature not to the *soil*, as in my text, but to a *fig-tree* growing in it, *Luke* xiii. 6—9; and in this the nature or quality of the *tree* itself is represented as unaltered, except by the effect that *digging round it* and *dunging it* might produce:

"A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none; cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground? And he, answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it. And if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down."

In both these parables, you see (and I doubt not it will be found to be the same in every other, in which the reformation and instruction of men are represented) *the nature of man* is supposed to be a thing that is never operated upon by the Divine power *immediately*, but always through the medium of certain means, without the mind, naturally adapted to that end. When man is the *soil*, nothing is done to it besides scattering proper seed upon it, and this seed will take root, or not, according to the previous quality and state of the soil; and when man is a *tree*, nothing is done to *that*, but only to the soil in which it grows; so that though the figures are different, the meaning of the two parables, the instruction we are led to derive from them, is the same; and, if we attend to it, we shall find it to be very important indeed, such as, when fully apprehended, cannot fail to alarm and to arouse us to the utmost.

We clearly learn from them, that the agency of God upon the minds of men, though real and constant, "for in him we live, and move, and have our being," [*Acts* xvii. 28,] is not *immediate* or *miraculous*, (for if it were immediate, it would be the same thing with what we do term miraculous,) but always through the medium of the natural means of instruction and reformation; and consequently that, without proper *opportunity*, and especially without proper *time*, for those means to produce their effect, no change is to be expected.

Ministers, therefore, may learn that, under God, who is the author of nature, and by whose agency all causes pro-

duce their proper effects, every thing depends upon their labours with their people, and that they can do nothing without labour; and the people may be apprized that, without their own earnest endeavours, concurring with the instruction and admonitions of their ministers, and other means of virtue and religion, they cannot receive any real benefit.

But ministers may likewise learn for their comfort, that, since all the laws of nature, and among them those to which the human mind is subject, are uniform, and, consequently, all causes never fail to produce an adequate effect, according to the circumstances in which they operate; if their admonitions be proper in themselves, and seasonably applied, their labour can never be wholly in vain. They will always have more or less effect, and therefore they may go through with their pious labours with cheerfulness and good hope.

The people, likewise, impressed with the same persuasion, will attend upon the word of exhortation, and diligently apply themselves to all the means of religion; assuring themselves that, whether the effect of their application be visible or not, it is not lost. Their characters are really improving; and, by a steady perseverance in receiving proper nourishment, they cannot fail (though insensibly, if the state of their minds be compared at short intervals) to *grow in grace*, till they come to *the full measure of the stature of Christ Jesus our Lord.* [*Ephes.* iv. 13.]

Whereas, without this persuasion concerning the uniformity of the laws of nature respecting our minds and their affections, ministers and people will both be subject to great occasional despondence, whenever present appearances happen not to be favourable; and some, in consequence of not always feeling (and it is impossible they should at all times feel) a lively sense of religious impressions, will abandon themselves to despair.

We shall learn to respect the laws of nature the more, if we consider the extraordinary provision that the Author of Nature has made to preserve their uniformity, and to supersede the necessity of the frequent violation of them, which he has done by means of occasional and seasonable miraculous interpositions. In fact, the proper use of miracles has been to make more miracles unnecessary. Also, miracles have generally respected the *external world*, and have had their effect on the minds of men in a natural and regular manner; and, therefore, they have produced very different effects acording to the different previous states of men's minds. And, indeed, all external miracles, all that appear

to have ever been provided in the history of the various dispensations of God to man, have been insignificant, and the whole plan of them was idle and absurd, if it was necesssry that *internal miracles* should be wrought also.

If moral impressions were made upon men's minds by an immediate divine agency, to what end has been the whole apparatus of *revealed religion?* For what rational purpose were all the miracles wrought by Moses, by Christ, and by the apostles, (the only object of which was to impress the minds of men with a conviction of the divine mission of certain teachers of religion, and, thereby, of the credit that was due to their instructions, in order, finally, that such instructions might the more easily produce that excellence of moral character which, in the epistle of St. Peter, is called a *divine nature*,*) if the Divine Being had, after all this, still found it necessary to produce this excellent disposition and character by his own immediate agency?

Has not God, at all times, the most intimate access to the minds of men; and cannot he who made us at first, new-make us, and new-mould us, as he pleases? Is it not in his power, by a word, a volition, (that word and energy by which "he spake and it was done," [*Psalm* xxxiii. 9,] by which *he commanded, and the whole creation stood fast,*) to change the hearts of the worst of men in an instant, and make them breathe the spirit of the purest angels? And cannot he preserve them in this state of sinless purity and excellence to all eternity? Certainly this, and every thing else that is possible in itself, is within the compass of his almighty power.

But, notwithstanding this, it is evident from fact, (whether we shall be able fully to comprehend the reason of it or not,) that he has not thought proper to work in this manner. And though it is his wish that *all men should be saved*, [1 *Tim.* ii. 4,] and *he wishes not the death of any sinner*, but *had rather that they should repent and live*, he does not think proper to work miracles on the minds of men for this purpose, but only provides *authoritative instruction*, and proper *motives;* which, being addressed to the mind, operate upon it in an uniform and regular manner.

Thus, when the old world became abandoned to wickedness, he only sent *Enoch* and *Noah* to preach to men; but he thought proper to destroy them all, perhaps by a miracle, rather than reform them, as he might have done, by his own immediate agency.

* See 2 *Pet.* i. 4, Vol. XIV. p. 414.

When the Israelites fell into idolatry, and the many horrid vices at that time inseparable from idolatry, he sent prophets from time to time to admonish them of various impending calamities. But when those admonitions had no good effect, he always thought proper that the threatened calamities, as famine, pestilence, war, or captivity, should actually overtake them, rather than give (as with a volition he might have done) a supernatural effect to the warnings and expostulations of his servants, by his own influence upon their minds.

So also, when God had compassion on the whole world lying in wickedness, and irrecoverably sunk in superstition and vice, all that he did to reclaim them was to send the gospel among them. And whatever moral good has been produced in the world by it, has been by natural means, and, to all appearance, by no other means whatever; these being fully adequate to the effect: and wherever the publication of the gospel, and of the great truths and motives of it, has failed to produce good effects, they have not been produced at all, but men continue wicked and abandoned, doomed to certain destruction.

Our Lord even wept over Jerusalem, [*Luke* xix. 41,] desiring, with the greatest affection and earnestness, to reclaim the inhabitants of it, and prevent their impending calamities; but his labours, and those of the apostles, failing of success, (that infatuated people continuing in their obstinate impenitency and unbelief,) God did not interpose any farther; and though the Jews are styled his *peculiar people*, he gave them up to the vengeance of the Romans, and made their calamities the most dreadful, and of the longest continuance, of any that are recorded in history.

We may assure ourselves, therefore, that God, notwithstanding the love that he bears to men, as his offspring, will certainly suffer them to perish, and undergo the pains of hell, whatever they are, rather than save them from that punishment when they die impenitent; and also, that he will suffer them to die impenitent, rather than employ any other than the usual natural means of their repentance and reformation. So sacred with him are his established laws of nature.

We read of our Lord's giving sight to the blind, limbs to the maimed, and the use of reason to those who were deprived of it; but never of his giving *a sound mind*, in a moral sense, to those who were destitute of that. For this, though the greatest of all purposes, he made use of nothing but in-

struction and admonition. He used no other means either to disarm the malice of his enemies, or to correct the imperfections of his best friends. Otherwise *Judas* would never have betrayed him, nor would *Peter* have denied him.

It might seem a matter not unworthy of Divine interposition, to shorten, or at least to alleviate in some measure, the extreme sufferings of so excellent a person as our Saviour; and the wisdom of the world was so much offended at the thought of *a suffering Messiah*, that, in the early ages of Christianity, great numbers could not be reconciled to the thought, and therefore maintained that our Lord suffered only in appearance, when in reality he felt no pain; and some in modern times have supposed that he put an end to his own life, before he could have been released from his pains in the course of nature. But, according to the plainest evidence of history, his death was as properly the natural effect of pain and torture (in the exhausted state to which he was previously reduced, especially by his agony in the garden) as that of any criminal who is now impaled, or broken on the wheel. And, indeed, the notion of our Lord's availing himself of his miraculous power to alleviate or shorten his own sufferings, could not but have the very worst effect upon the minds of those who should be called to suffer in his cause, and who must know that they were not possessed of any such advantage.

Lastly, God has been pleased to suffer the Christian religion to be exceedingly debased by a mixture of Heathenish opinions and superstitions, and a power to be assumed in his church so contrary to the genius of it as to be termed, in the language of prophecy, *antichristian*, rather than interfere to prevent the operation of natural causes, tending to introduce those corruptions, and to establish that enormous power. And though the Divine Being has resolved to reform his church, to put a period to those abuses, and to overturn that usurped authority, he does it only by means of natural causes; by providing, in the usual course of things, a better understanding of the Scriptures, an increase of knowledge of various other kinds, and a juster sense of men's natural rights and privileges. These causes have been operating some centuries, and will, no doubt, at length accomplish the great ends for which they were provided. But these means of reforming the Christian church, and restoring it to its pristine purity, are, in all respects, *natural*, and by no means do they come under the description of miracles. Yet we do, and ought to bless God for the Reformation.

It will be said that, according to the plainest language of the Scriptures, God *does* work upon the minds of men, and that the success of the preaching of the gospel is, in a particular manner, ascribed to it. Does not *Paul* say, (1 *Cor.* iii. 6,) "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase"?

I answer, that this representation is undoubtedly and most strictly true. The success of the gospel is certainly the work of God; but the question is, whether, in this, he works *with*, or *without*, *natural means;* and it is not the less his work, because he employs certain means adapted to answer his purposes. His agency is just as complete on one supposition as on the other. All the difference respects the mode or manner of his operation; and it becomes us to look at all times beyond all second causes, to the ultimate and proper cause of all good, which is God only. For, strictly speaking, as our Lord himself observed, [*Matt.* xix. 17,] "There is none good but one, that is God;" all other goodness being only the effect of his.

In this case, is not the gospel itself called [1 *Thess.* ii. 9] "the gospel of God," because he gave it? Was it not by his appointment that *Paul* preached it at *Corinth*, and that *Apollos* watered it there? And if, after this, the natural effect of the Corinthians hearing the gospel was their receiving and profiting by it, is not the whole to be ascribed to the God of nature and providence? Without that constitution of nature, by which their minds were disposed to receive the truths of the gospel, and without the providential events of *Paul* planting the gospel, and *Apollos* watering it, the Corinthians had been mere Heathens still.

That this language is only the same in which the pious writers of the Scriptures describe all the events of Providence, overlooking all second causes, and regarding the primary cause only, is evident from numberless passages. Does not the Psalmist (*Ps.* civ. 27) represent all the beasts of the field as *waiting upon God, that he may give them their meat in due season?* "That thou givest them," says he, [*ver.* 28,] "they gather. Thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good."

But does God feed wild beasts by miracle, as he fed the Israelites in the Wilderness? By no means, though the language, literally interpreted, would denote as much. His feeding them is in the common course of providence, by giving them natural powers for seizing their prey, and thus enabling them to provide for themselves. And very often,

not being able to meet with proper food, or being disabled by accidents from seizing it, they actually starve and perish.

In the same manner, therefore, we ought to interpret what is said of God's giving the increase, when *Paul* planted and *Apollos* watered; and also what is said of Lydia, (*Acts* xvi. 14,) viz. that *God opened her heart*, "that she attended unto the things which were spoken by Paul." By a train of previous circumstances and impressions, all under the direction of Providence, she was disposed to receive the preaching of Paul with due attention, and without prejudice.*

We are instructed to pray that God would give us, *day by day, our daily bread*, and it is from God that we *do* receive our daily bread; but it is only in the natural course of things, and by the use of proper means for procuring it for ourselves. We are also authorized [*Ps.* li. 10] to pray that God would *create in us a clean heart, and renew in us a right spirit;* and if we have a clean heart, and a right spirit, we ought to ascribe that to God also, and not, as the Heathen Stoics did, to themselves, exclusively of God. But God gives us good dispositions of mind as he gives us our daily bread, in a natural, and by no means in a supernatural, manner. It is by the help of means adapted to impress our minds, and never without them. The language of Scripture is uniform, and exactly similar in both these cases, and therefore is certainly to be understood in the same manner.

If we admit any other interpretation of such language as this, we shall ascribe moral evil to the immediate Divine agency, as well as moral good; for God is as expressly said *to harden the heart of Pharaoh*, as *to open that of Lydia;* whereas there does not appear to have been any occasion for a miracle to harden the heart of *Pharaoh*.† He acted just as other bad men, blinded by their passions and by their interest, in similar circumstances, still act; and his hardness and obstinacy answering the most important purposes in the plan of Divine Providence, it was, for that end, no doubt, permitted to take place.

In sickness we always do, and ought to pray for health; but we never expect that God will interpose by miracle to relieve us. When limbs are to be amputated, and other operations in surgery are to be performed, we look up to God, but at the same time we never fail to have recourse to the hand of a skilful surgeon.

* See Vol. XIII. p. 455. † See on *Exod.* vii. 3, Vol. XI. p. 132.

Even when the Divine Being has addressed himself to the mind of man in a supernatural manner, as in the gift of prophecy, it does not appear that such communications have ever affected the moral character of those who were the subjects of them, any farther than such communications tended, in a natural way, to produce that effect. Balaam was a bad man, though he was a prophet; and though Saul was for a time among the prophets, his character was not altered, but he continued the same man to the end of his life.

The apostle Paul was converted to Christianity by the miraculous appearance of Christ to him; but it does not appear that his temper of mind was changed by it, otherwise than as a full conviction of the truth of Christianity naturally and necessarily made a change in him. He still possessed the same vehemence of temper, the same zeal and ardour of mind, though in a different cause. He became, no doubt, a much better man upon the whole than he would have been if he had continued a Jew, but it was in consequence of being actuated by better principles, and of being subjected to more favourable influences. It should be considered that, instead of inflaming his hatred of men by the practice of persecuting them, he would have the best opportunity of improving in meekness, patience, and a love of the brethren, in consequence of being himself persecuted along with them. Thus would his superior virtues naturally arise from his being in circumstances peculiarly favourable to the acquisition and growth of them.

The cure of madness, called, in the language of Scripture, *the casting out of demons*, (to the malignant influence of which that disorder was usually ascribed,) and also the gift of tongues, were miracles that immediately respected the minds, or the mental faculties of men, but they were not of a moral nature. It no more followed that a man restored to the use of his reason, would be a good man, than one that was restored to his health, or the use of his limbs. Paul expressly supposes that a man might have the gift of tongues, and yet not have charity; and not only to those who were the subjects of miracles, but even to some of the workers of them, our Lord himself assures us he will say, *I know you not; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.*

Prayer for good dispositions of mind is proper, on the idea of God being the real giver of all the good we receive, though in the usual course of nature, of which he is the author; and also more especially of his realizing to us that

character of *parent* and *guardian* which he has condescended to assume. And if he *has* provided that our reasonable requests shall actually be granted, it is the very same thing to us, whether this be brought about by his mediate or his immediate agency. He is still the giver, and the only difference is in the manner of bestowing the gift. It is to God that we ought always to look for the supply of all our wants, corporeal or mental, and to him should our gratitude be expressed for the gospel and all its effects, as well as for food and raiment; and we actually receive blessings of both these kinds, viz. spiritual and temporal, in the same manner. It is always through the channel of some natural means, and never, at least in this age of the world, by miracle.

Let us, therefore, look up to God for every thing, but always in the use of proper means; and let us beware of deceiving ourselves, as too many do, by expecting any end whatever, especially a proper temper of mind, necessary to qualify us for future happiness, without the diligent use of such means as he has prescribed for that purpose. If God had thought proper to work, and gain this end, by miracles, there would have been no occasion whatever for preaching, for the gospel itself, or even for the practice of virtue, which is the end of the gospel, and of the preaching of it; for, as I have, indeed, observed already, could not the Divine Being change the hearts of the most profligate of men the moment they were to enter another world, and fit them as completely for the enjoyment of heaven as if he had made them go through all the difficulties, trials, and discipline of a virtuous life? But as we are well assured that God will not do this, though he is certainly able to do it, we may be equally assured that the hearts of none will be thus miraculously changed in an instant, as many suppose, at any period of life. A real change of character, from vice to virtue, is only to be effected in a natural, and, consequently, in a gradual manner.

If this doctrine be true, (and the whole tenor of Scripture and reason confirm it,) the doctrine of *instantaneous conversion* is altogether a most dangerous delusion. Buoyed up by this vain hope, men continue in sin, fancying they can be converted at the very hour of death; and though they are brought to the gallows by their crimes, even from thence they pretend to be sure of going to heaven.

But if there be any such thing as an *established course of nature*, if our minds be subject to any regular laws and

influences, and if changes of mind are made in no other manner than by the natural influence of the objects presented to men, and by the circumstances in which they are placed, (which certainly corresponds to fact,) *time* must be requisite to form any character. A *character* is a thing of slow growth, but of a firm constitution. The rudiments of it are formed early, while the mind is sensible to impressions of all kinds; but when once it is formed, it is with great difficulty indeed that it receives any material and lasting change.

Ministers, therefore, should bestow their labour chiefly on the *young*, instructing them in the principles of religion, inculcating good maxims, forming them to good habits, and making every thing in religious discipline familiar to them. This is bending the oak while it is pliable, and while the task is not difficult. But, with respect to persons advanced in life, all that we can hope to do is to palliate excesses, and prevent enormities. The character, the general temper and turn of mind are fixed, and can no more be made to bend to our efforts than an oak of some growth and standing.

I shall conclude with observing, that there are two things that we should principally attend to with respect to God, and both are of the greatest importance. The first is, the consideration of his universal presence, and his constant, uncontrolled agency; and the second is, his acting by natural means, or in a regular manner. We must, in the first place, endeavour to see God in every thing, and to see every thing in God, that is, in its relation to him. We must habitually look beyond all second causes, considering them in no other light than as instruments in the hands of God, the only proper cause of all, and employed by him to accomplish, in the best manner, his excellent purposes.

But, in the second place, it is almost of as much importance, that we consider God, not as a Being incapable of foresight, and acting as particular occasions and emergencies require, but as foreseeing every thing that can ever come to pass, and adapting means to ends, from all eternity; as acting by general laws and established rules, without ever deviating from them, except for great and extraordinary purposes, and then in such a manner as that his interposition shall be publicly known and acknowledged, so as to have the effect of proper miracles. Now, that God has sufficiently provided for the instruction and reformation of mankind by the gospel, we are to consider the age of miracles as over. And if we are not to expect miraculous interpo-

sitions in the external world, similar to those that were exhibited in the times of Moses and the prophets, or those that attended and promoted the first promulgation of the gospel, much less can we expect any miraculous influences on the minds of men, which, in a moral sense, do not appear to have ever been the subject of miracles in former times. Indeed, in this sense they would have been a very improper subject of miracles, on many obvious accounts.

Not to respect the general presence and agency of God, is *practical Atheism*. It is *living without God in the world;* and to expect his miraculous interpositions, and not to consider him as acting by general laws, is to encourage an *enthusiasm* and a *delusion* that is, in some cases, almost as dangerous; leading men to neglect the natural and only efficacious means of improving their characters, and to depend on certain supernatural impulses and feelings, of vague and uncertain description, and that cannot have any relation to moral virtue, which consists in a supreme reverence and love of God, an entire devotedness to his will, in doing and suffering, a disinterested love of his creatures and our brethren, and a just self-government, equally favourable to both.

On the whole, the doctrine of *divine agency* and *divine influence*, respecting things spiritual, as well as temporal, is true, and in the highest degree important. Our characters approach to perfection in proportion as we keep it in view, and they are debased and bad, in proportion as we lose sight of it. But the doctrine of a proper *supernatural influence* on the mind is false; and though, like most other false principles, it *may* be very innocent, not in fact superseding the use of the natural means of religion, it is always delusive, and in some cases highly dangerous.

Let this doctrine, therefore, teach us, as *individuals*, to cultivate, above all things, a spirit of *habitual devotion*, founded on the belief of the Divine presence with us, and of his constant agency upon us, and upon all things. This is that *faith* which is the only sure *anchor of the soul* in a tempestuous world, or rather, it is the wings on which we rise above the world, and approach to a state of union with God.

But let us carefully avoid indulging the vain and delusive imagination of an immediate and supernatural communion with God, which is always the foundation of *spiritual* pride, and the bane of humble devotion and virtue; for there is no

true devotion without the deepest humility, and what is sometimes not improperly called *self-annihilation.*

As *ministers* and *people*, let us bear in mind, on the one hand, that a congregation is a flock that must be tended and fed; that food for the mind must be provided, received, and digested, like food for the body, and that we receive nourishment and strength from both, in the same natural and gradual manner. We must, therefore, *labour for the bread that endureth to everlasting life*, as well as for *the bread that perishes.* And though we are to expect no success but in the diligent use of proper means, we must, at the same time, ascribe to God, and acknowledge that we receive from him (who has wisely and graciously adapted all means to their proper ends) both the bread that we daily eat, and the benefit we receive from the administration of the word and ordinances of the gospel, both our growth in strength and stature, and what is called our *growth in grace.*

"Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things. *To him, therefore, and to him only,* be glory for ever. Amen." *Rom.* xi. 36.

TWO DISCOURSES:

I. ON HABITUAL DEVOTION:

II. ON THE DUTY OF NOT LIVING TO OURSELVES.

Both preached to Assemblies of Protestant Dissenting Ministers, and published at their Request.

[First published in 1782.]

PREFACE.

THE former of these discourses I have been induced to publish by the request of the body of Dissenting Ministers who assemble annually at Dudley, in Staffordshire, before whom the greater part of it was delivered on Tuesday the 21st of May last. The latter was preached before the assembly of Ministers of the counties of Lancaster and Chester, met at Manchester, May 16th, 1764,* to carry into execution a

* The Author was then Tutor at Warrington.

scheme for the relief of their widows and children. But though it was printed at their request, it was not generally published, as only a small edition was printed and sold in that neighbourhood. Several of my friends having expressed their wishes to see it made more public, I have thought proper to print them together, especially as the subjects of them have a considerable relation to each other; the one recommending a proper disposition of mind with respect to God, and the other that which respects men. In both of them, also, I have availed myself of Dr. Hartley's Theory of the Human Affections, the excellence of which is, that it not only explains, with wonderful simplicity, many phenomena of the mind, which are altogether inexplicable on other principles, but also leads to a variety of practical applications, and those of the most valuable kind. Of this I have given several specimens in my "Observations relating to Education,"* and others of my publications.

My apology for introducing any thing of this nature into these discourses is, that neither of them was composed for a common audience; besides, the more abstruse parts of them are of such a nature as to be pretty easily intelligible to persons of reflection, though they should have no knowledge of that particular theory; for the general doctrine of *the association of ideas* is known to all persons of a liberal education. Whenever I have delivered these discourses before a common audience, I have omitted whatever I thought would not be readily understood by them, and such passages (which, however, are not very many) may now be passed over, without much difficulty or inconvenience, by those persons for whose use they are not calculated.

To the former of these discourses the public are already under considerable obligations, though they have been ignorant of it; as it was the occasion of that excellent poem of Mrs. Barbauld's, entitled, *An Address to the Deity*,† which was composed immediately after the first delivery of it, before an assembly of ministers at Wakefield, in Yorkshire, in the year 1767. Were I to inform my readers how soon that poem appeared after the delivery of the Discourse, it would add much to their idea of the powers of the writer. I could also make the same observation with respect to several other pieces, and some of them the most admired in that collection.‡

* "More especially as it respects the Mind." 1778. See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 128.
† *Poems*, 1792, p. 131. ‡ See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 78.

If my theological publications have been more of a *speculative* than of a *practical* nature, it is merely because circumstances have led me to it, and by no means because the former are more pleasing to me. I hope I shall always consider speculation as subservient to practice. The most exact knowledge of truth, and the greatest zeal for it, will avail nothing without the practice of those virtues which the most uninstructed of mankind perfectly understand. Nay, the more knowledge we have of the Christian religion, of the general plan and object of it, the more inexcusable shall we be, if we do not, in the first place, take care to impress our hearts with that *love of God*, and that unreserved devotedness to his will, which our Saviour [*Mark* xii. 29, 30] calls, *the first and greatest of all the commandments*, and also with that disinterested good-will to our fellow-creatures, which he calls, [*ver.* 31,] the *second great commandment, and like unto it.*

He was himself equally exemplary with respect to them both; and it is in vain for us to pretend to be *Christians* if we do not study to resemble him (whom alone we are to acknowledge in the character of Lord and Master) in the disposition of our minds, and in the conduct of our lives. May we all be so attentive to discharge our proper duty, and to improve the talents with which we are severally intrusted, that when, according to his promise, *he shall return and take an account of his servants, we may be found without spot and blameless.*

The world in which we live, with all the influences to which we are subject, may be equally our friend or our enemy, according to the use we make of it. It is wonderfully adapted, by the exercise it gives to our faculties, and to our passions and affections, *to establish, strengthen, and settle us* in the habit and practice of all virtue, and to raise us to a pitch of excellence to which Adam in Paradise could never have attained; but then it is equally possible that, by sloth and indulgence, we may debase our natures to a degree equally wonderful. The knowledge and belief of Christianity itself, as well as every other advantage of which we are possessed, is also capable either of promoting the moral perfection of our natures, and our fitness for immortal happiness, or of making us the proper objects of a greater condemnation than that of *Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment.*

It behoves us, then, to consider our situation and all our privileges very attentively, that we may make the best use of them. It is not in our option to be in any other circum-

stances than those in which our Maker has placed us. It will also avail us nothing *to hide any talent in a napkin*. As we have received it, we must give an account of the use we make of it.

We are likewise ignorant of the time when this account will be called for; and great and serious as the business of life is, the time allowed for the dispatch of it is both short and uncertain; but, though short, it is sufficient for the purpose of it, if it be rightly improved; and then the uncertainty of its duration is a circumstance that does not need to give us any concern. *At such an hour as we think not, the Judge may come*, but then, "blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching." [*Luke* xii. 37.]

I shall take the liberty to close this Preface with an extract of what is more peculiarly practical, and therefore more immediately suiting my present purpose, from Mrs. Barbauld's poem above-mentioned:

If the soft hand of winning pleasure leads,
By living waters, and thro' flow'ry meads;
When all is smiling, tranquil, and serene,
And vernal beauty paints the flatt'ring scene;
Oh teach me to elude each latent snare,
And whisper to my sliding heart, Beware.
With caution let me hear the syren's voice,
And doubtful, with a trembling heart, rejoice.

If friendless, in a vale of tears, I stray,
Where briars wound, and thorns perplex my way,
Still let my steady soul thy goodness see,
And with strong confidence lay hold on thee,
With equal eye my various lot receive,
Resign'd to die, or resolute to live;
Prepar'd to kiss the sceptre, or the rod,
While God is seen in all, and all in God.

I read his awful name, emblazon'd high
With golden letters on the illumin'd sky;
Nor less the mystic characters I see
Wrought in each flow'r, inscrib'd on ev'ry tree;
In ev'ry leaf that trembles to the breeze
I hear the voice of God among the trees;
With thee in shady solitudes I walk,
With thee in busy crowded cities talk;
In every creature own thy forming pow'r;
In each event thy providence adore.
Thy hopes shall animate my drooping soul,
Thy precepts guide me, and thy fear controul;

Thus shall I rest, unmov'd by all alarms,
Secure within the temple of thy arms;
From anxious cares, from gloomy terrors free,
And feel myself omnipotent in thee.

Then when the last, the closing hour draws nigh,
And earth recedes before my swimming eye;
When trembling on the doubtful edge of fate
I stand, and stretch my view to either state;
Teach me to quit this transitory scene,
With decent triumph, and a look serene;
Teach me to fix my ardent hopes on high,
And, having liv'd to thee, in thee to die,*

A Discourse
ON
HABITUAL DEVOTION.

PSALM X. 4:

The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God. God is not in all his thoughts.

GOD, my Christian brethren, is a being with whom we all of us have to do, and the relation we stand in to him is the most important of all our relations. Our connexions with other beings, and other things, are slight and transient, in comparison with this. God is our *maker*, our constant *preserver* and *benefactor*, our moral *governor*, and our final *judge*. He is present with us wherever we are; the secrets of all hearts are constantly known to him, and *he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*. [*Hab.* i. 13.] Here, then, is a situation, in which we find ourselves, that demands our closest attention. The consideration is, in the highest degree, interesting and alarming; knowing how absolutely dependent we are upon God, that "in him we live, and move, and have our being," [*Acts* xvii. 28,] and knowing also, that by vice and folly we have rendered ourselves justly obnoxious to his displeasure.

Now, to think, and to act, in a manner corresponding to this our necessary intercourse with God, certainly requires that we keep up an habitual regard to it; and a total, or very great degree of inattention to it, must be highly crimi-

* In reprinting this *Extract* I have added a few intermediate lines, according to the edition of Mrs. Barbauld's *Poems*, 1792.

nal and dangerous. Accordingly, we find in the Scriptures, that it is characteristic of a good man, [*Psalm.* xvi. 8,] that *he sets the Lord always before him*, and that *he acknowledges God in all his ways.* [*Prov.* iii. 6.] Whereas, it is said of the wicked, in my text, that *God is not in all their thoughts;* and elsewhere, [*Rom.* iii. 18,] that "there is no fear of God before their eyes;" that *they put the thoughts of God far from them, and will not the knowledge of the Most High.*

This circumstance seems to furnish a pretty good test of the state of a man's mind with respect to virtue and vice. The most abandoned and profligate of mankind are those who live *without God in the world*, entirely thoughtless of his being, perfections and providence; having their hearts wholly engrossed with this world and the things of it; by which means those passions which terminate in the enjoyment of them, are inflamed to such a degree, that no other principle can restrain their indulgence. These persons may be called *practical Atheists;* and the temper of mind they have acquired, often leads them to deny both natural and revealed religion. They secretly wish, indeed they cannot but wish, there may be no truth in those principles, the apprehension of which is apt to give them disturbance; and hence they give little attention to the evidence that is produced for them, and magnify all the objections they hear made to them. And it is well known, that, in a mind so strongly biassed, the most cogent reasons often amount to nothing, while the most trifling cavils pass for demonstration. It is the same with respect to any other speculation, when the mind has got a *bias* in favour of any particular conclusion.

On the other hand, a truly and perfectly good man loves, and therefore cherishes, the thought of God, his father and his friend; till every production of divine power and skill, every instance of divine bounty, and every event of divine providence, never fails to suggest to his mind the idea of the great Author of all things, *the giver of every good and every perfect gift*, and the sovereign disposer of all affairs and of all events. Thus he lives, as it were, constantly *seeing him who is invisible.* He sees God in every thing, and he sees every thing in God. He *dwells in love*, and thereby *dwells in God, and God in him.* And so long as he considers himself as living in the world which God has made, and partaking of the bounty with which his providence supplies him; so long as he is intent upon discharging his duty, in the situation in which he believes the Divine Being has

placed him, and meets with no greater trials and difficulties than, he is persuaded, his God and Father has appointed for his good, it is almost impossible that the thought of God should ever be long absent from his mind. Every thing he sees or feels will make it recur again and again perpetually. His whole life will be, as it were, one act of devotion; and this state of mind, being highly pleasurable, and his satisfaction having infinite sources, will be daily increasing, so as to grow more equable, and more intense, to all eternity; when it will be *joy unspeakable, and full of glory*.

These are the two extremes of the sentiments and conduct of men with respect to God, and all the varieties of human characters will be found somewhere between them; so that we may be deemed virtuous or vicious, in proportion as we approach to the one or the other.

The more imperfect of the middle classes of mankind will have their minds too much engrossed by this world and the things of it, so as to exclude, in a very great degree, the apprehension of God, and of their relation to him. Provided, however, that they have had a religious education, these thoughts cannot be prevented from recurring from time to time, and producing stronger or weaker resolutions of repentance and amendment; but not having their full influence, and, therefore, serving rather to disquiet the mind, conscious of a want of perfect integrity, they will be apt to be overborne by the superior power of things seen and temporal; and the minds of such persons being in this fluctuating condition, whatever success they may have in the world, their lives will contain a great mixture of anxiety and remorse.

But those whom we may style the more perfect of the middle classes of men, though, like the former, their minds may be, now and then, carried away by the magic influences of this world; and though they may give too far and too eagerly into the pursuit of its pleasures, riches and honours, they will never wholly, or for a long time, lose sight of God and of their duty; and pious sentiments recurring with superior force at intervals, will produce a kind of *religious fervour*, which, rousing the mind to a greater exertion of its powers, will produce good resolutions with considerable strength and vigour, and thereby break their growing attachment to the world. These fervours, however, will of course remit, and other objects will necessarily resume some part, at least, of their influence; but if a sense of God and of religion have once taken firm hold of the

mind, in the early part of life, there will be reason to hope that an express regard to them will return with greater force, and, after shorter intervals, perpetually. By this means, such strength will be given to the principle of conscience, that in the farthest excursions they make from the strict path of religion, even while they maintain no express regard to God in their actions, the bare apprehension of a thing being *right* and their *duty*, will, in all considerable instances, immediately and mechanically determine their minds, so that they will never deliberately do any thing which they are convinced is unlawful, and offensive to God. At most, if ever a stronger temptation than usual should induce them to transgress their known duty, in any of the greater instances of it, the state of their minds will be such, as that these transgressions will be followed by the keenest compunction and contrition, which will make them less liable to commit the same offence a second time.

Thus we see that those persons in whose minds there is this prevailing disposition to virtue, will be improved both by the uniform practice of their duty, which necessarily strengthens the *habit* of it, and even by occasional transgressions, which gives a stronger *stimulus* to the power of conscience. But there is great danger, lest these violations of known duty be either so great as to produce despair, which naturally hardens the mind, or so frequent as to beget a habit. Both these weaken the power of conscience: the man then goes backward in religion, and may at last, even from this more advanced state of virtue, be brought *to commit all iniquity with greediness.* "Let him," then, "that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall;" [1 *Cor.* x. 12,] and let all of us, conscious of the frailty of our natures, be intent upon *working out our salvation with fear and trembling.*

An *habitual regard to God* being the most effectual means of advancing us from the more imperfect to the more perfect state I have been describing, I shall endeavour to recommend this leading duty to you, by a fuller and more distinct enumeration of its happy effects; and I shall then shew what I apprehend to be the most effectual methods of promoting it, and of removing the various obstructions to it.

1. An habitual regard to God in our actions tends greatly to keep us firm in our adherence to our duty. It has pleased Divine Providence to place man in a state of trial and probation. This world is strictly such. We are surrounded with a great variety of objects, adapted to gratify a

variety of senses, with which we are furnished. The pleasures they give us are all innocent in moderation, and they engage us in a variety of agreeable and proper pursuits. But our natures are such, as that the frequent indulgence of any of our appetites tends to make its demands inordinate, and to beget an habitual propensity to indulge it; and this proneness to the excessive indulgence of any of our passions enslaves our minds, and is highly dangerous and criminal. By this means we too often come to forget God our maker, to injure our fellow-creatures of mankind, and to do a still greater and more irreparable injury to ourselves, both in mind and body.

It has pleased Almighty God, therefore, from the concern he had for our good, to forbid these immoderate indulgences of the love of pleasure, riches, and honour, by express *laws*, guarded with the most awful sanctions. Now we are certainly less liable to forget these laws, and our obligation to observe them, when we keep up an habitual regard to our great Lawgiver and Judge; when we consider him as always *present with us;* when we consider that *his eyes are in every place, beholding both the evil and the good;* that he *sees in secret*, and will one day *reward openly*. In this manner we shall acquire an habitual reverence for God and his laws, which will end in an habitual obedience to them, even without any express regard to their authority. Thus we should certainly be less likely to neglect the request of a friend, or the injunction of a master, if we could always keep in mind the remembrance of our friend or master; and a constant attention to them would certainly give us a habit of pleasing them in all things.

2. An habitual regard to God promotes an uniform cheerfulness of mind; it tends to dissipate anxiety, or melancholy, and may even, in some cases, prevent madness. Without a regard to God, as the maker and governor of all things, this world affords but a gloomy and uncomfortable prospect. Without this, we see no great *end* for which we have to live; we have no great or animating *object* to pursue; and whatever schemes we may be carrying on, our views are bounded by a very short and narrow space. To an Atheist, therefore, every thing must appear little, dark, and confused. And let it be considered that, in proportion as we forget God, and lose our regard to him, we adopt the sentiments and views of Atheists, and shut our eyes to the bright and glorious prospects which religion exhibits to us.

Religion, my brethren, the doctrine of a God, of a provi-

dence, and of a future state, opens an immense, a glorious, and most transporting prospect; and every man, who is humbly conscious that he conforms to the will of his Maker, may enjoy and rejoice in this prospect. Considering ourselves as the subjects of the moral government of God, we see a most important sphere of action in which we have to exert ourselves; we have the greatest of all objects set before us, *glory, honour, and immortality; an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away*, as the reward of our faithful *perseverance in well-doing;* and we have a boundless existence, an eternity, in which to pursue and enjoy this reward.

These great views and objects, the contemplation of which must be habitual to the mind which keeps up an habitual regard to God, cannot fail to diminish the lustre of *the things of time and sense*, which engage our attention here below; and while they lessen our solicitude and anxiety about them, they must cure that fretfulness and distress of mind which is occasioned by the disappointments we meet with in them.

For the same reason, this habitual regard to God, this life of devotion which I would recommend, must tend, in some measure, to prevent that most deplorable of all the calamities mankind are subject to, I mean *madness*. It is well known that the circumstance which generally first occasions, or at least greatly contributes to this disorder, is too close and too anxious an attention to some *single thing*, in which a person is greatly interested; so that, for a long time, he can hardly think of any thing else, and particularly is often prevented from *sleeping* by means of it. Thus we frequently see, that when persons are of a sanguine temper of mind, a severe disappointment of any kind will end in madness. Also, a sudden transport of *joy*, from unexpected success, will sometimes have the same effect. But, from the nature of the thing, this violence of either kind could hardly take place in a truly devout and pious mind, in the mind of a man who considers all the events in which he can be concerned as appointed by a God infinitely wise and good; who, he is persuaded, hath, in the most afflictive providences, the most gracious intention to him, and to all mankind; and who, by the most prosperous events, means to try his virtue, and to put him upon the most difficult of all exercises, that of behaving properly in such circumstances. To a mind rightly disposed, and duly seasoned with a sense of religion, nothing here below will appear to be of sufficient

moment to produce these dreadful effects. We shall *rejoice as though we rejoiced not; and weep as though we wept not*, knowing that "the fashion of this world passeth away." [1 *Cor.* vii. 31.]

Deep melancholy is often occasioned, in persons of a lower tone of spirits, by the same kind of disappointments which produce raging madness in others. It is the effect of *despair*, and could never take place but when a person apprehended that that which we may call his *all*, that in which he put his chief trust and confidence, had failed him, and he had no other resource to fly to. But a truly religious man can never despair; because, let what will befal him here below, he knows his chief happiness is safe, being lodged "where neither moth nor rust can corrupt, and where thieves cannot break through nor steal." [*Matt.* vi. 20.] *In patience*, therefore, he will be able at all times *to possess his own soul*, exercising a steady trust and confidence in God, *the rock of ages*, *the sure resting-place of all generations*.

Melancholy, or despondence in a lower degree, what we commonly call *lowness of spirits*, generally arises from a want of some object of pursuit, sufficient to engage the attention, and rouse a man to the proper exertion of his powers. In this situation, he has nothing to do but to think of himself and his own feelings, which never fails to involve him in endless anxiety and distress. But a principle of religion will ever put a man upon a variety of active and vigorous pursuits. No truly pious and good man can be an idle man. He will fully employ all his power of doing good; he will not keep *his talent hid in a napkin;* and, far from complaining that time hangs heavy on his hands, he will rather complain that he has not time enough for the execution of half his benevolent purposes.

3. An habitual regard to God fits a man for the business of this life, giving a peculiar presence and intrepidity of mind; and is, therefore, the best support in difficult enterprises of any kind. A man who keeps up an habitual regard to God, who *acknowledges him in all his ways*, and lives a life of devotion to him, has a kind of *union with God;* feeling, in some measure, the same sentiments, and having the same views. Hence, being, in the language of the apostle, [2 *Cor.* vi. 1,] *a worker together with God*, and therefore being confident that God is with him and for him, *he will not fear what man can do unto him.* [*Heb.* xiii. 6.] Moreover, fearing God, and having confidence in him, he is a stranger to every other fear. Being satisfied that God

will work all his pleasure in him, by him, and for him, he is free from alarm and pertubation, and is not easily disconcerted, so as to lose the possession of his own mind. And having this presence of mind, being conscious of the integrity of his own heart, confiding in the favour of his Maker, and therefore, sensible that there is nothing of much real value that he can lose, he will have leisure to consider every situation in which he finds himself, and be able to act with calmness and prudence, as circumstances may require.

Is there, then, any active and difficult service to which we are summoned by the voice of our country, of mankind, and of God, these are the men, I mean men of religion and devotion, in whom we can most confide. Other men may be roused by their passions to any pitch of patriotic enthusiasm. They may oppose the insiduous attempts of corrupt ministers or tyrants to enslave their country, or may bravely face a foreign enemy in the field, though they risk their fortunes and their lives in the contest; but mere worldly-minded men, staking their *all* in such enterprises as these, and having little more than a sense of *honour* to support them, may, in some critical moment, be sensible of the value of what they risk, and, on that principle, prove cowards.

Whereas the man of religion feels the same indignation against all iniquitous attempts to enslave himself and his country, and if he have the same native ardour of mind, he will be roused to act with the same vigour against a tyrant, or an invader; but running no risk of what is of most consequence to him, he will not be so liable to be intimidated: he will be more master of himself, have greater presence of mind, and act with greater prudence in time of danger. If he die in the glorious struggle, he dies, not with the gloomy ferocity of the mere man of this world but with the triumph of a Christian, in a consciousness of having finished his career of virtue in the most glorious manner in which he could possibly finish it, in the service of his country, and of mankind.*

Having thus considered the important *effects* of an habitual regard to God in all our ways, I come to treat of the

* A *man of religion*, like my Author, would I suspect, in the case supposed, have been encountered by objections to this *glorious manner* of losing life, even *in the service of his country and of mankind*, which are not here anticipated. To the *man of this world*, he would probably have been constrained to resign *the glorious struggle*, rather than *resist unto blood*, to gain or preserve any good which this world can bestow. See a discussion on *Defensive* War, *Mon. Repos.* XIV. pp. 149—152, 303, 409, 410, 725.

most proper and effectual methods of promoting this temper of mind.

1. If you be really desirous to cultivate this habitual devotion, endeavour, in the first place, to divest your minds of too great a multiplicity of the cares of this world. The man who lives to God, in the manner which I have been endeavouring to describe, lives to him principally, and loves and confides in him above all. To be solicitous about this world, therefore, as if our chief happiness consisted in it, must be incompatible with this devotion. *We cannot serve God and Mammon.* If we be *Christians*, we should consider, that the great and professed object of our religion, is the revelation of a future life, of unspeakably more importance to us than this transitory world, and the perishable things of it. As Christians, we should consider ourselves as *citizens of heaven*, and only *strangers and pilgrims here below.* We must, therefore, see, that as Christians, there is certainly required of us a considerable degree of indifference about this world, which was only intended to serve us as a passage to a better.

The Divine Being himself has made wise provision for lessening the cares of this world, by the appointment of one day in seven, for the purpose of rest and avocation from labour. Let us then, at least, take the advantage which this day gives us, of *calling off our eyes from beholding vanity*, and of *quickening us in the ways of God.*

This advice I would particularly recommend to those persons who are engaged in *arts*, *manufactures*, and *commerce.* For, highly beneficial as these things are, in a political view, and subservient to the elegant enjoyment of life, they seem not to be so favourable to religion and devotion, as the business of *agriculture;* and for this reason, therefore, probably, among others, the Divine Being forbade commerce to the people of the Jews, and gave them such laws as are chiefly adapted to a life of husbandry. The husbandman is in a situation peculiarly favourable to the contemplation of the works of God, and to a sense of his dependence upon him. The rain from heaven, and various circumstances relating to the weather, &c., on which the goodness of his crops depends, he receives as from the hand of God, and is hardly sensible of any secondary, or more immediate cause. If he understand any thing of the principles of vegetation, and can account for a few obvious appearances upon what we call *the laws of nature;* these laws he knows to be the express appointment of God; and he cannot help perceiving the

wisdom and goodness of God in the appointment; so that the objects about which he is daily conversant, are, in their nature, a lesson of gratitude and praise.

Besides, the employment of the husbandman being, chiefly, *to bring food out of the earth*, his attention is more confined to the real wants, or at least, the principal conveniencies of life; and his mind is not, like that of the curious artist and manufacturer, so liable to be fascinated by a taste for superfluities, and the fictitious wants of men.

Nor, lastly, does the business of husbandry so wholly engross a man's thoughts and attention, while he is employed about it, as many of the arts and manufactures, and as commerce necessarily does. And it should be a general rule with us, that the more *attention of mind* our employment in life requires, the more careful should we be to draw our thoughts from it, on *the day of rest*, and at other intervals of time set apart for devotional purposes. Otherwise, a worldly-minded temper, not being checked or controuled by any thing of a contrary tendency, will necessarily get possession of our hearts.

2. This brings me to the second advice, which is by no means to omit stated times of worshipping God by prayer, public and private. Every passion and affection in our frame is strengthened by the proper and natural expression of it. Thus frequent intercourse and conversation with those we love promotes friendship, and so also the intercourse we keep up with God by prayer, in which we express our reverence and love of him, and our confidence in him, promotes a spirit of devotion, and makes it easier for the ideas of the Divine Being and his providence to occur to the mind on other occasions, when we are not formally praying to him. Besides, if persons whose thoughts are much employed in the business of this life, had no time set apart for the exercises of devotion, they would be in danger of neglecting it entirely; at least, to a degree that would be attended with a great diminution of their virtue and happiness.

But, in order that the exercises of devotion may be the most efficacious to promote the true spirit and general habit of it, it is advisable that *prayers*, properly so called, that is, direct addresses to the Divine Being, be short. The strong feelings of reverence, love, and confidence, which ought to animate our devotions, cannot be kept up in such minds as ours, through a prayer of considerable length; and a tedious

languor in prayer is of great disservice to the life of religion, as it accustoms the mind to think of God with indifference; whereas, it is of the utmost consequence, that the Divine Being always appear to us as an object of the greatest importance, and engage the whole attention of our souls. Except, therefore, in public, where prayers of a greater length are, in a manner, necessary, and where the presence and concurrence of our fellow-worshippers assist to keep up the fervour of our common devotion, it seems more advisable, that devotional exercises have intervals of meditation, calculated to impress our minds more deeply with the sentiments we express; and that they be used without any strict regard to particular times, places, or posture of body.

This method of conducting devotional exercises, which makes them consist chiefly of meditation upon God and his providence, has in many cases several advantages over a direct address to God, which should peculiarly recommend it to those who are desirous to cultivate the genuine spirit of devotion. Among other advantages, and that not the least, in meditation, the mind is not so apt to acquiesce in the mere *work done* (what the schoolmen call the *opus operatum*) as it is in formal prayer, especially when it is made of considerable length. So prone, alas! is the mind of man to superstition, that hardly any thing can be prescribed to us, as a *means* of virtue, but we immediately acquiesce in it as an *end;* and not only so, but the consequence of a punctilious observance of prayer, and other means of religion, is too often made the foundation of a spiritual pride, and self-sufficiency, which is of a most alarming nature; being directly opposite to that deep humility and self-abasement, which is ever the predominant disposition of a mind truly devout. The sentiment corresponding to the language, *Stand by thyself, I am holier than thou*, is not, I am afraid, peculiar to the Pharisaical Jew, or the Romish devotee. It infects many Protestant religionists, being generated by similar causes. Rather than be liable to this, it is certainly better, far better, even to be less regular in our exercises of devotion. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." [*James* iv. 6.] *Every one that is proud in heart, is an abomination to the Lord.*

3. In the course of your usual employments, omit no proper opportunity of turning your thoughts towards God. Habitually regard him as *the ultimate cause*, and *proper author* of every thing you see, and the disposer of all events

that respect yourselves or others. This will not fail to make the idea of God occur familiarly to your mind, and influence your whole conduct.

It is to be regretted, that the taste and custom of this country is such, that a person of a devotional turn of mind, cannot indulge himself in the natural expression of it, even upon the most proper and just occasions, without exposing himself to the particular notice, if not the ridicule, of the generality of those who may be present; whereas, could we decently and seriously express our gratitude to God, upon every agreeable occurrence, and our resignation and submission to his will upon every calamitous event of life, it would tend greatly to strengthen the habit of *acknowledging God in all our ways*, and promote the spirit of devotion.

In no other country, I believe, whatever, neither among the *Roman Catholics*, nor *Mahometans*, have people, even the most fashionable and polite, any idea of being ashamed of their religion. On the contrary, they are rather ostentatious of it, and therefore they seem to have more than they are really possessed of: and this is the case with some, both of the Established Church, and among the Dissenters in England. But, unfortunately, this outward show of religion was carried to such a length, about a century ago, in this country, and was sometimes made to subserve such infamous purposes, that, I believe, the greater part of the most sincerely pious and humble Christians, now make a point of exposing to the world as little of the religion they have as possible; so that they are really possessed of much more than they seem to have. This, I trust, is the case with great numbers, who are little suspected of being particularly religious, because they are seldom, or never heard to talk about it. And, upon the whole, while things are so unfortunately circumstanced, I think this extreme preferable to the other; as, of all things, the reproach of hypocrisy ought to be avoided with the utmost care.

4. In a more especial manner, never fail to have recourse to God upon every occasion of strong emotion of mind, whether it be of a pleasurable, or of a painful nature. When your mind is labouring under distressing doubts and great anxiety, or when you are in any way embarrassed in the conduct of your affairs, fly to God, as your friend and father, your counsellor and your guide. In a sincere and earnest endeavour to discharge your duty, and to act the upright and honourable part, *commit your way unto him*, repose yourselves upon his providence, confiding in his care to overrule

every thing for the best, and you will find a great, and almost instantaneous relief. Your perturbation of mind will subside, as by a charm, and the storm will become a settled calm. Tumultuous and excessive joy will also be moderated by this means; and thus all your emotions will be rendered more equable, more pleasurable, and more lasting. And this is produced not by any supernatural agency of God on the mind, but is the natural effect of placing entire confidence in a Being of perfect wisdom and goodness.

But the capital advantage you will derive from this practice will be, that the idea of God being, by this means, associated with all the strongest emotions of your mind, your whole stock of devotional sentiments and feelings will be increased. All those strong emotions, now separately indistinguishable, will coalesce with the idea of God, and make part of the complex train of images suggested by the term, so that you will afterwards think of God oftener, and with more fervour than before; and the thought of him will have greater influence with you than ever.

5. In order to cultivate the spirit of habitual devotion, labour to free your minds from all consciousness of guilt and self-reproach, by means of a constant attention to the upright and steady discharge of the whole of your duty. In consequence of neglecting our duty, we become backwards, as we may say, to make our appearance before God. We cannot look up to him with full confidence of his favour and blessing; and are, therefore, too apt to omit devotion entirely. Besides, we always feel an aversion to the exercise of *self-abasement* and *contrition*, which are all the sentiments that we can with propriety indulge in those circumstances; especially as we have a secret suspicion, that we shall, for some time at least, go on to live as we have done; so that rather than confess our sins, and continue to live in them, we choose not to make confession at all.

But this, my brethren, is egregious trifling, and highly dangerous. Thus, at best, all improvement is at a stand with us, if we be not going fatally backwards in our moral state. If this be our character (as I believe it is, more or less, that of a very great number even of those I have called the better sort of the middle classes of men) let us in time, and in good earnest, cast off all our sins, negligences, and follies, by true repentance. Let us draw near, and *acquaint ourselves with God*, that we may be at peace. You can have no true peace, assurance, or satisfaction of mind in

this life without it: for, if you be of the class I am now referring to, it is too late for you to have a perfect enjoyment of a life of sin and dissipation. And between that kind of peace, or rather *stupor*, which those who are abandoned to wickedness, those who are wholly addicted to this world, and make it their sole end (or those who are grossly ignorant of religion) enjoy, and that *inward peace and satisfaction* which accompanies the faithful and earnest discharge of every known duty, there is no sufficient medium. You may go about seeking rest in this wide space, while your hearts are divided between God and the world, but you will find none; whereas, *the fruit of righteousness*, of a sincere and impartial, though imperfect, obedience to the law of God, *is peace and assurance for ever.*

6thly, and lastly. To facilitate the exercise of devotion, cultivate in your minds just ideas of God with whom you have to do upon those occasions, and divest your minds, as far as possible, of all superstitious and dishonourable notions of him. Consider him as the good Father of the prodigal son, in that excellent parable of our Saviour. Let it sink deep into your minds, as one of the most important of all principles, that the God with whom we have to do, is essentially, of himself, and without regard to any foreign consideration whatever, *abundant in mercy, not willing that any should perish, but that he had rather that all should come to repentance;* and then, notwithstanding you consider yourselves as frail, imperfect, and sinful creatures; and though you cannot help accusing yourselves of much negligence, folly, and vice, you may still approach him with perfect confidence, in his readiness to receive, love, and cherish you, upon your sincere return to him.

In this light our Lord Jesus Christ always represented *his Father and our Father, his God and our God.* This is the most solid ground of consolation to minds burdened with a sense of guilt; and what is of great advantage, it is the most natural, the most easy and intelligible of all others. If once you quit this firm hold, you involve yourselves in a system, and a labyrinth, in which you either absolutely find no rest, and wander in uncertainty and horror; or, if you do attain to any thing of assurance, it is of such a kind, and in such a manner, as can hardly fail to feed that *spiritual pride* which will lead you to despise others; nay, unless counteracted by other causes, too often ends in a spirit of censoriousness, hatred, and persecution.

Religious melancholy, the most deplorable of all the

cases of melancholy, will never be effectually relieved by any consideration but that of the mercy and clemency of the Divine Being. This unhappy state of mind arises from superstition. It consists in an excessive and unreasonable fear of God, and is peculiarly incident to persons of the greatest tenderness of conscience. And if we consider nothing but the holiness of the Divine nature, and our proneness to vice and folly, there will be no end of this distressing scrupulosity in the best-disposed minds. But, in our situation, we must learn to acquiesce in the sense of our manifold imperfections, and the unavoidable consequences of them: and to take refuge in the goodness and compassion of God, who *considers our frame, and remembers that we are but dust.* This is the part of humility.

So long as we are seeking to justify ourselves in the sight of God (unless our minds be absolutely blinded) we shall not fail to condemn ourselves; "for there is not a just man upon earth," not even the most just and righteous man, "that doeth good and sinneth not." [*Eccles.* vii. 20.] Yea, *in many things we offend all:* so that "if we *should* say that we have no sin, we *should* deceive ourselves, and the truth *would not be* in us:" but it is a never-failing source of consolation, that "if we confess our sins, *God* is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." [*John* i. 8, 9.]

Moreover, let it be considered, by persons labouring under this deplorable calamity, that this fear of displeasing God, and anxiety about our future state, is one of the best evidences we can have that *our hearts are*, upon the whole, *right towards God;* that we are seeking *first*, and before all things else, "the kingdom of God and his righteousness," [*Matt.* vi. 33,] and that we are not so much concerned about *the bread that perishes*, as about "that which endures to everlasting life." [*John* vi. 27.] Our Saviour said, [*Matt.* v. 4, 6,] "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted; blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled;" so that this excess of religious fear, producing despondence and melancholy, is a state of greater safety, though it be less pleasing, than that of religious joy.

This fear of God, when it has once exceeded its due bounds, and degenerated into superstition, and when it is not cured by a confidence in the Divine mercy and clemency, by that *love which casteth out fear*, is of a most alarming nature, and has often been productive of the most fatal

effects. What is it that superstitious mortals have scrupled either to do, or suffer, in order to recommend themselves to God? Voluntary pains and penalties, of the most frightful kinds, have not been spared for this purpose; and men, like ourselves, yea, *the excellent of the earth*, men *of whom the world was not worthy*, have been persecuted, and massacred, under the idea of *doing God service.*

I shall, also, here give an admonition concerning another inconvenience we are apt to be betrayed into, by imperfect and unworthy conceptions of God. It is that kind of enthusiasm which arises from an excess of religious joy, as the superstition I have just described arises from an excess of religious fear. It is well known, that in the beginning of a religious life, persons of a warm temper of mind, are apt to be carried away with extreme fervour. They are swelled with a tumultuous and rapturous joy, attended with great zeal in the discharge of their duty. But all this is of short continuance, and generally ends in a most unaccountable *languor*, and even a total indifference about religion, which astonishes them, and which they are apt to consider as the consequence of the presence of God deserting them; that peculiar presence which they supposed to be the cause of the preceding fervour. Also, in this deadness of devotional fervour, and indifference about religion, they are apt to imagine their former experience to have been an illusion. All religion, in that state of their minds, appears like a dream; and they afterwards often fancy themselves to have been tempted by the devil, to disbelieve and renounce it all, natural and revealed.

But the peculiar warmth of those emotions is owing to the novelty of them, together with a kind of *familiarity* in our conceptions of God, which leads to such a passionate joy as we naturally indulge with respect to beings like ourselves. But more awful, and, on account of the preceding excessive familiarity, too awful ideas of God will follow and check that fond transport. The emotion itself having been above the usual tenor of the sensations, will, of course, subside, and the idea of God being as yet single, as we may say, and not associated with a sufficient variety of other objects, cannot long be retained in the mind, any more than any other single idea, unconnected with others; consequently, other objects and trains of thought which we have been before accustomed to, will force themselves upon the mind, and these not having had any previous connexions with the ideas of God and religion, will exclude them, so that the

former religious state of mind will as absolutely disappear, for a time, as if it had never existed.

All this, however, is perfectly natural, and will give no alarm to those who have a sufficient knowledge of human nature. In this case, a person who would favour his progress in religion, should calmly acquiesce in the imperfection of his devotion. He should give himself, in the intervals of it, to the steady prosecution of his lawful business, considering *that* as his proper *duty*, as *serving mankind* and *serving* God, and therefore by no means foreign to religion; depending upon it that, if he only be careful *to keep his conscience void of offence*, his devotional feelings will return in due time. Let him, then, endeavour to purify and exalt his conceptions of God as much as possible, for this will tend both to give him humiliating views of himself, and to make his pious emotions more composed and more permanent; and, by degrees, by frequently endeavouring to raise his views above the world, while he is employed in it, religion will come to be no longer the business of an hour, or of a limited time with him, but he will *walk with God all the day long*, and proceed in the path of his duty with a calm and equal, a steady and a persevering progress.

I shall conclude this Discourse with observing, that if a person should never experience any thing of this fervour of devotion I have been endeavouring to describe and explain, I should by no means pronounce him the less safe on that account. This fervour of devotion is, in a manner, incompatible with the constitution of some persons' minds; and an uniform care *to glorify God in all our actions*, and *to preserve a conscience void of offence towards God and towards all men*, [*Acts* xxiv. 16,] without any thing of that warmth of zeal and devotion which often delights, but also often misleads others; this, I say, will certainly be sufficient, according to the gracious constitution of the gospel, to entitle a person to that *glorious recompence of reward*, to that *eternal life* which awaits all those who, by nothing but "patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality." [*Rom.* ii. 7.] Our Saviour himself has assured us, [*Matt.* xii. 50,] that if a man *do the will of God*, (he makes no other condition, he describes no particular *feeling*,) he shall be to him as *a brother, a sister, or a mother.*

We well know, my Christian brethren, *what it is that the Lord our God requires of us*, in order to live and to die in his favour; namely, "to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with *our* God." [*Micah.* vi. 8.] To this

plain path of duty, then, let us adhere, without being anxious about any thing farther. Whether we have those fervours of devotion which some feel, and are apt to be proud of, or not, we shall experience that *great peace of mind* which *all those have who keep God's law;* and having lived the life of the righteous, our *latter end will also be like his;* the foundation of our joy being "the testimony of our consciences, that in simplicity and godly sincerity,—we have had our conversation in the world." [2 *Cor.* i. 12.]

It is true, we are imperfect, sinful creatures; but, notwithstanding this, we have all possible encouragement given us to trust in the abundant mercy of our gracious God and Father, in that mercy which is essential to his nature, as a Being who is infinitely good, and who is *love itself;* and which, if we could entertain the least doubt concerning it, he has fully declared to all the world, by Moses and the Prophets, by Jesus Christ and his Apostles, whom he sent into the world to preach the grateful doctrine of *repentance and remission of sins*, thereby *to redeem (that is, to deliver) us from all iniquity* and *to reconcile us to God.* Animated, therefore, by the glorious promises of the gospel, let us, my Christian brethren, be "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, *knowing* that our labour shall not *finally* be in vain in the Lord." [1 *Cor.* xv. 58.]

The Duty

OF

NOT LIVING TO OURSELVES.

ROMANS xiv. 7.

For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

IT is the excellence of our rational nature that by it we are capable of living to some known end, and of governing our lives and conduct by some rule; whereas, brute creatures necessarily live and act at random, just as the present appetite influences them. Let us, then, my brethren, make the most of this our prerogative, by proposing to ourselves the noblest end of human life, and engaging in such a course of actions as will reflect the greatest honour upon our nature, and be productive of the most solid and lasting happiness, both in the performance and the review of them.

Agreeably to this, let the principal use we make of our understanding be, to discover what the great end of life is; and then let us use the resolution and fortitude that is either natural to us, or acquired by us, in steadily conforming ourselves to it.

But as the regular investigation of the rule of life, from the light of nature only, may be tedious, and perhaps at last unsatisfactory, let us, without waiting for the result of such an inquiry upon the principles of reason, take a more clear and sure guide, the Holy Scriptures, in so important a subject, and see afterwards whether reason and experience will not give their sanction to that decision.

The great end of human life is negatively expressed by the apostle Paul in my text, "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself;" and if we attend to the connexion of these words, we shall find what, in the apostle's idea, is the true end to which men ought to live.

The apostle is here treating of a controversy which had arisen in the Christian church, about the lawfulness of eating meat sacrificed to idols, and keeping holy certain days, together with some other ceremonious observances, and exhorting both parties to do nothing that might give offence, or be a snare to the other, lest, by their means, any one should perish for whom Christ died.

As the best foundation for mutual tenderness and charity, he reminds them that both parties acted, with regard to all ritual observances, as they imagined was the will of Christ. *He that observeth a day, observeth it to the Lord; and he that observeth not a day, to the Lord he observeth it not.* And after giving his sanction in the fullest manner to this maxim, and deciding, with respect to this particular case, that all Christians ought to act according to the will of Christ, and consult the good and the peace of their fellow-christians, he declares in general, that *no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself; but whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord;* that is, in all our actions, our views should not be directed to ourselves, but to the interest of our holy religion. And as the Christian religion has for its object the happiness of mankind, (since *Christ came to bless us in turning us away from our iniquities,)* it is the same thing as if he had said, the great scope of all our conduct should be the real welfare of all to whom our influence can extend.

We should, therefore, my brethren, according to this apostolical maxim, by no means confine our regards to ourselves,

and have our own pleasure, profit, or advantage in view in every thing we undertake; but look out of, and beyond ourselves, and take a generous concern in the happiness of all our brethren of mankind; make their sorrows our sorrows, their joys our joys, and their happiness our pursuit: and it is in this disinterested conduct, and in this only, that we shall find our own true happiness.

That this is the true rule of human life, will appear, whether we consider the course of nature without us, the situation of mankind in this world, or take a nearer view of the principles of human nature. And we shall likewise find that several considerations, drawn from the Holy Scriptures, will farther confirm and illustrate this maxim of human conduct, which was first suggested by them.

1. This disinterested conduct of man is most agreeable to the course of nature without us. There is no part of the creation but, if it be viewed attentively, will expose the selfishness and narrow-mindedness of men: for among all that infinite variety of things and creatures which present themselves to our view, not one of them appears to have been made merely for itself, but every thing bears a relation to something else. They can hardly be said to afford any matter for contemplation singly, and are most of all the objects of our admiration when considered as connected with other things. The primary uses of things are few, but the secondary uses of every thing are almost infinite. Indeed, the secondary uses of things are so many that we are lost in the multiplicity of them; whereas we can give no answer, if we be asked what is the primary use of any thing, but this general one, which will equally suit every thing, that every creature which is capable of happiness, was made to enjoy that share of it which is suited to its nature.

Now what do we mean when we say that the several parts of nature are *adapted to* one another, but that they are *made for the use* of one another? I shall mention only a few of these mutual relations and uses; beginning with those parts of nature which are the most remote from one another, and whose mutual relations and uses are the least obvious, and so proceed to those in which they are more obvious. The sun, the moon, the planets, and comets, are strictly connected, and combined into one system. Each body, though so exceedingly remote from the rest, is admirably adapted, by its situation, magnitude, and velocity in its orbit, to the state of the whole, in those respects and

many others. This connexion, probably, also extends to the remotest bodies in the universe; so that it is impossible to say that the withdrawing of any one would not, in some respect or other, affect all the rest.

The clouds and the rain are designed to moisten the earth, and the sun to warm it; and the texture and juices of the earth are formed so as to receive the genial influences of both, in order to ripen and bring to perfection that infinite variety of plants and fruits, the seeds of which are deposited in it. Again, is not each plant peculiarly adapted to its proper soil and climate, so that every country is furnished with those productions which are peculiarly suited to it? Are not all plants likewise suited to the various kinds of animals which feed upon them? So that, though they enjoy a kind of life peculiar to themselves, and all the influences they are exposed to be adapted to promote that life, they themselves are as much adapted to maintain that higher kind of life which is enjoyed by creatures of the animal nature.

The various kinds of animals, are, again, in a thousand ways adapted to, and formed for the use of one another. Beasts of a fiercer nature prey upon the tamer cattle: fishes of a larger size live almost wholly upon those of a less: and there are some birds which prey upon land animals, others upon fishes, and others upon creatures of their own species.

That brute animals are excellently adapted to the use of man, and were, therefore, made to be subservient to the use of man, man will not deny. The strength of some, and the sagacity of others, are as much at our command, and are as effectually employed for our use, as if they belonged to ourselves. We can even turn to our advantage every passion of their nature, so that we can safely repose the greatest confidence in many of them. They are the guardians of our possesions and of our lives. They even enter into our resentments, and, at our instigation, take part in our revenge.

Having now advanced to man, the chief of this lower creation, and shewn that all creatures of the vegetable and merely animal nature, live and die for his use, pride might bid us here break off the chain of mutual relations and uses, which we have been pursuing thus far, and leave man in the enjoyment of his superiority; but, beside that it is contrary to the analogy of nature, in which we see nothing but what has innumerable secondary relations and uses, that man only should be made for himself.

2. The situation of man in this world, or the external

circumstances of human nature, still oblige us to assert with Paul, that *no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.* Man himself is but a link, though the highest link of this great chain, all the parts of which are closely connected by the hand of our Divine Author. Nay, the more various and extensive are our powers, either for action or enjoyment, on that very account, the more multiplied and extensive are our wants; so that, at the same time that they are marks of our superiority to, they are bonds of our connexion with, and signs of our dependence upon the various parts of the world around us, and of our subservience to one another.

In fact, every time that we gratify any of our senses, though it be in consequence of the exertion of our own powers, we are reminded (if we will be so just to ourselves as to take the hint) of our dependence upon something without us; for the means of our gratification are, in all cases, evidently without ourselves.

If we be served by the vegetables and the animals which this earth affords, we are obliged, in our turn, to favour their propagation, to promote their cultivation, and to preserve them in a healthy and vigorous state; and employment of this kind doth, in fact, take up a great part of our attention and labour. We must make the creature in some measure happy, if we would be effectually served by it. And the attention which domestic animals give to us, and their anxiety for us, is not to be compared to the attention we bestow on them, and the anxiety we undergo on their account.

But my subject leads me to attend to the connexion which man has with man, rather than with the inferior part of the creation, though it seemed not improper to point out that. In general, nothing can be more obvious than the mutual dependence of men on one another. We see it in the most barbarous countries, where the connexions of mankind are the fewest and the slightest. This dependence is more sensible, indeed, in a state of infancy, when the least remission of the care of others would be fatal to us; but it is as real and necessary, and even vastly more extensive, though less striking, when we are more advanced in life, especially in civilized countries. And the more perfect is the state of civil society, the more various and extended are the connexions which man has with man, and the less able is he to subsist comfortably without the help of others.

The business of human life, where it is enjoyed in per-

fection, is subdivided into so many parts, (each of which is executed by different hands,) that a person who would reap the benefit of all the arts of life in perfection, must employ, and consequently be dependent upon thousands; he must even be under obligations to numbers of whom he has not the least knowledge.

These connexions of man with man are every day growing more extensive. The most distant parts of the earth are now connected: every part is every day growing still more necessary to every other part; and the nearer advances we make to general happiness, and the more commodious our circumstances in this world are made for us, the more intimately and extensively we become connected with, and the more closely we are dependent upon one another.

By thus tracing the progress of man to that state of happiness which he now enjoys, we may be led to think that, in pursuing it still farther, to a more happy state of being, adapted to our social natures, we shall find ourselves still more variously and intimately connected with, and more closely dependent upon one another, which affords a far nobler and more pleasing prospect to a person of an enlarged mind and of a social and benevolent disposition, than he could have from supposing that, after death, all our mutual connexions will be broken, and that every good man will be made transcendently happy within himself, having no intercourse, or at least necessary intercourse, with any being besides his Maker.

By these arguments, which are drawn from facts that are obvious to every person who attends to the external circumstances of mankind, it is plain that no man can live of himself; and even that the rich are, in fact, more dependent upon others than the poor; for, having more wants, they have occasion for more, and more frequent supplies. Now it will easily be allowed, that every reason why we cannot live *of* ourselves, is an argument why we ought not to live *to* ourselves: for certainly no person receives an obligation, but he ought to confer one. Every connexion must, in some measure, be mutual. And, indeed, the circulation of good offices would in a great measure cease, if the passage were not as open, and as free from obstruction, in one part of the common channel as another. The rich, if they would receive the greatest advantages from society, must contribute to the happiness of it. If they act upon different maxims, and think to avail themselves of the pleasures of society without promoting the good of it, they will never know the true

pleasures of society. And, in the end, they will be found to have enjoyed the least themselves, who have least contributed to the enjoyment of others.

Thus it appears, from a view of the external circumstances of mankind, that man was not made to live to himself. The same truth may be inferred,

3. From a nearer inspection of the principles of human nature, and the springs of human actions.

If any man look into himself, and consider the springs and motives of his own actions, he will find that there are principles in his nature which would be of no use, were the intercourse he has with his fellow-creatures cut off; for that, both the efficient and final causes of their operations are without himself. They are views of mankind and their situations, which call those principles into action; and if we trace the operation of them, we shall clearly see that, though they be strictly connected with private happiness, their ultimate and proper object is the happiness of society.

What other account can we give of that impulse which we all, more or less, feel for society? And whence is that restless and painful dissatisfaction which a man feels when he is long excluded from it, but that, in such a solitary condition, his faculties have not their proper exercise, and he is, as it were, out of his proper element?

Whence is that quick sensibility which we are conscious of, with respect to both the joys and the sorrows of our fellow-creatures, if their happiness or misery were a matter of indifference to us? Can we feel what is sometimes called the contagion of the passions, when we find that our minds contract a kind of gloom and heaviness in the company of the melancholy, and that this melancholy vanishes in company which is innocently cheerful, and question the influence of social connexions? Much less can the reality or the power of the social principle be doubted when a fellow-creature in distress calls forth the most exquisite feelings of compassion, attended with instant and strong efforts towards his relief.

So essential a part of our nature are these social passions, that it is impossible for any man wholly to escape the influence of them; but if we would be witness of their strongest effects, and see them branched out into that beautiful subordination which corresponds to all the varieties of our mutual relations, we must look into domestic life. There we shall clearly see that the most frequent and almost the

only cause of a man's joys and sorrows are the joys and sorrows of others, and that the immediate aim of all his actions is the well-being and happiness of others.

Doth not the sense of honour in the human breast derive all its force from the influence which social connexions have over us? Of what use could it be but to beings formed for society? What do we infer from our dread of infamy, and from our being so strongly actuated by a passion for fame, and also from the universality and extent of this principle, but that our nature obliges us to keep up a regard to others in our whole conduct, and that the Author of nature intended we should? And is it not a farther evidence of the ultimate design of this principle, that, in general, the means of being distinguished, at least of gaining a solid and lasting reputation among men, is to be useful to mankind; public utility being the most direct road to true fame?

Every noble and exalted faculty of our nature is either directly of a social nature, or tends to strengthen the social principle. Nothing can be more evident than that the dictates of conscience strongly enforce the practice of benevolence; and the pleasures of benevolence certainly constitute the greatest part of those pleasures which we refer to the moral sense. They must necessarily do so, while the foundation of all virtue and right conduct is the happiness of society; for then every reflection that we have done our duty, must be the same thing as a reflection that we have contributed what was in our power to the good of our fellow-creatures.

Lastly, of what doth devotion itself consist, but the exercise of the social affections? What are the dispositions of our minds which are called forth into action in private or public prayer, but reverence for true greatness, humility, gratitude, love, and confidence in God, as the greatest and best of beings; qualities of the most admirable use and effect in social life.

I may add, that not only are the highest and the worthiest principles of human conduct either truly social, or a reinforcement of the social principle, but even the lowest appetites and passions of our nature are far from being indifferent to social connexions, considerations, and influences. That the pleasures we receive from the fine arts, as those of music, poetry, and painting, and the like, are enjoyed but very imperfectly except in company, is very evident to all persons who have the least taste for those pleasures. I may

even venture to say, that there is hardly a voluptuary, the most devoted to the pleasures of the table, but indulges himself with more satisfaction in company than alone.

Having given this general view of the social turn of our whole natures, whereby we are continually led out of ourselves in our pursuit of happiness, I shall now consider farther, how all our appetites and passions, which are the springs of all our actions, do, in their own nature, tend to lead us out of ourselves, and how much our happiness depends upon our keeping their proper objects in view, and upon our minds being thereby constantly engaged upon something foreign to themselves; after which I shall shew what are the fittest objects thus to engage our attention.

In order to preserve mutual connexion, dependence and harmony among all his works, it has pleased our Divine Author to appoint, that all our appetites and desires, to whatever sense, external or internal, they be referred, should point to something beyond ourselves for their gratification; so that the idea of *self* is not in the least necessary to a state of the highest enjoyment.

When may men be said to be happy, but when their faculties are properly exercised in the pursuit of those things which give them pleasure? I say the pursuit rather than the enjoyment, not because enjoyment makes no part of our happiness, but because the vigorous and agreeable sensations with which our minds are impressed during the pursuit of a favourite object are generally, at least in this life, of vastly more consideration. The pleasure we receive the instant we arrive at the height of our wishes may be more exquisite, but the others are of much longer continuance; and, immediately upon the gratification of any of our desires, the mind is instantly reaching after some new object.

Supposing now the mind of any person to be fully and constantly engaged in the pursuit of a proper object, to the possession of which he is sensible he every day makes near approaches, and his desires be not so eager as to make him uneasy during the pursuit, what more is requisite to make him as happy as his nature can bear? He will not be the less happy because the object he is in pursuit of is foreign to himself; nor would it make him any happier to have the idea of its contributing to his happiness. Nay, it may be shewn, that it were better for us, in general, with respect to real enjoyment, never to have the idea of the relation which the objects of our pursuit bear to ourselves; and this is most

of all evident with respect to the higher pleasures of our nature, from which we derive our greatest happiness.

Our benevolence, for instance, leads us immediately to relieve and oblige others. Pleasure, indeed, always attends generous actions, and is consequent upon them; but the satisfaction we receive in our minds from having done kind offices to others, is far less pure, and less perfectly enjoyed, if at all, when we had this, or any other private gratification, in view before the action.

In like manner, he who courts applause, and does worthy actions solely with a view to obtain it, can have no knowledge of the genuine pleasure arising either from the good action itself, or the applause that is given to it; because he is sensible, in his own mind, that if those persons who praise his conduct were acquainted with the real motive of it, and knew that he meant nothing more, by his pretended acts of piety and benevolence, than to gain their applause, they would be so far from admiring and commending, that they would despise him for it.

It is evident, for the same reason, that no person can enjoy the applause of his own mind on the account of any action which he did with a view to gain it. The pleasures of a good conscience, or, as they are sometimes called, those of the moral sense, cannot be enjoyed but by a person who steadily obeys the dictates of his conscience, and uniformly acts the part which he thinks to be right, without any view to the pleasure and self-satisfaction which may arise from it.

The idea of *self*, as it is not adapted to gratify any of our appetites, and can contribute nothing towards their gratification, can only occasion anxiety, fear, and distrust about our happiness, when it is frequently the subject of our thoughts. The apprehension and dread of misery (which is certainly the occasion of most of the real trouble and misery of men in this life) is beyond measure increased from this source; and the effects of it are most sensibly felt both in the lesser and greater scenes of our lives.

It is chiefly an anxious solicitude about ourselves, and the appearance we shall make in the eyes of others, which is the cause of that affectation and constraint in behaviour which is so troublesome to a person's self, and so ridiculous in the eyes of others. This trifling remark, being so frequently verified, may serve to shew that these sentiments are by no means merely speculative; but that they enter into the daily scenes of active life. Indeed they are in the

highest sense practical, and upon them depend those maxims of conduct which contain the great secret of human happiness, and which are confirmed by every day's experience.

That the idea of *self* frequently occurring to our minds in our pursuit of happiness is often a real and great obstruction to it, will be more obvious from a short series of plain facts and examples, which I shall therefore mention.

Why are brute creatures, in general, so contented and happy in their low sphere of life, and much more so than the mind of man could be in their situation? Is it not because their views are perpetually fixed upon some object within their reach, adapted to their desires; and that the abstract idea of *self*, together with the notion of their being in the pursuit of happiness, and liable to be disappointed in that pursuit, never comes in their way to interrupt the uniform and pleasurable exertion of their faculties in the pursuit of their proper objects.

The days of our infancy are happy for the same reason, notwithstanding the imperfection of our faculties, and the greater proportion of pains and disorders we are then liable to. Those years of our lives slide away in unmixed enjoyment, except when they are interrupted by the actual sensations of pain; for we are then incapable of suffering any thing from the *fear* of evil. It is not till after a considerable time that we get the abstract idea of *self;* an idea which the brutes, probably, never arrive at, and which is of excellent use to us, as will be shewn in its proper place, in our pursuit of happiness; but is often abused to the great increase of our misery, as will appear by the facts we are now considering.

Why are persons whose situation in life obliges them to constant labour, either of body or mind, generally more happy than those whose circumstances do not lay them under a necessity to labour, and whose own inclination does not lead them to it; but because the former have their thoughts constantly employed in the pursuit of some end, which keeps their faculties awake and fully exerted? And this is always attended with a state of vigorous, and consequently, pleasurable sensations. Persons thus employed have not much leisure to attend to the idea of self, and that anxiety which always attends the frequent recurring of it; whereas, a person who has no object foreign to himself, which constantly and necessarily engages his attention, cannot have his faculties fully exerted; and therefore his mind cannot possibly be in that state of vigorous sensation in which happiness consists.

The mind of such a person, having nothing without him sufficient to engage its attention, turns upon itself. He feels he is not happy, but he sees not the reason of it. This again excites his wonder, vexation and perplexity. He tries new expedients: but as these are only temporary, and generally whimsical choices, none of them have sufficient power to fix and confine his attention. He is still perpetually thinking about himself, and wondering and uneasy that he is not happy. This anxious, perplexed state of mind, affecting the nervous system, necessarily occasions a more irritable state of the nerves, and of the brain, which makes the unhappy person subject to more frequent alarms, to greater anxiety and distress, than before; till, these mental and bodily disorders mutually increasing one another, his condition is at length the most wretched and distressing that can be conceived. No bodily pain, no rack, no torture, can equal the misery and distress of a human being whose mind is thus a prey to itself. No wonder that, in this situation, many persons wish the utter extinction of their being, and often put a period to their lives.

This is certainly the most deplorable situation to which a human being can be reduced in this world, and is doubly the object of our compassion, when the disorder has its seat originally in the body, in such a manner as that no endeavours to engage a man's thoughts upon other objects can force his attention from himself.

It is no wonder that we see more of this kind of unhappiness in the higher ranks of life, and among persons who are in what is called *easy circumstances*, than in any other. Indeed, the case is hardly possible in any other than in easy circumstances; for, did a man's circumstances really find constant employment for his thoughts, were his business so urgent as to leave him no leisure for suspense and uncertainty what to do, it is plain, from the preceding principles, that such anxiety and distress could not take place. It is well known that the mind suffers more in a state of uncertainty and suspense, for want of some motive to determine a man's choice, than he can suffer in the vigorous prosecution of the most arduous undertaking. I appeal to men of leisure, and particularly to persons who are naturally of an active and enterprising disposition, for the truth of this fact.

These principles likewise, as is evident without entering into a detail of particulars, furnish us with a good reason why we generally see fathers and mothers of large families infinitely more easy, cheerful and happy than those persons

who have no family connexions. The greater affluence, ease and variety of pleasures which these can command, (subject to the inconveniences I have mentioned, and which are commonly visible enough in the case I refer to,) are a poor equivalent for the necessary, constant, and vigorous exertion of their faculties, and, consequently, the strong sensations and lively enjoyments which a variety of family cares, conjugal and parental tenderness, supply for the others.

This would be the case universally, where large families could subsist, if the parents had sufficient employment, and if an early-acquired taste for superfluities had not taken too deep root in their minds.

Happy is it for the world, and a great mark of the wisdom and goodness of Divine Providence, that men's minds are so constituted, that though they be in easy circumstances, they are never completely satisfied. The passions of most men are still engaging them in a variety of pursuits, in which they are as eager, and which they prosecute with as much alacrity and earnestness, as if necessity compelled them to it; otherwise, every person who could live easy would be inevitably miserable.

Infinitely happier would it be for themselves, and for the world, if all their pursuits were such as would give them satisfaction upon the reflection as well as in the pursuit, and be of real advantage to the rest of mankind; which two circumstances never fail to coincide. However, with regard to a person's self in this life, any end is unspeakably better than no end at all; and such is the wise appointment of Providence, that bad ends tend in a variety of ways to check and defeat themselves, and to throw the minds of men into better, nobler, and more satisfactory pursuits; a consideration which cannot fail to suggest, to a benevolent and pious mind, a prospect of a future happy and glorious state of things.

It may be said, that if happiness consist in, or depend upon the exertion of our faculties upon some object foreign to ourselves, it is a matter of indifference what the object be. I answer, that during the pursuit it is nearly so, and universal experience, I imagine, will justify the observation. This is the reason why we see men equally eager, and equally happy in the pursuit of a variety of things which appear trifling to one another. Thus the florist, the medalist, the critic, the antiquary, and every adept in the minuter branches of science, all enjoy equal happiness in the pursuit of their several objects; and as much as the historian, the

astronomer, the moralist, or the divine, who refers his nobler studies to no higher end, and to whom they only serve as an exercise of his faculties.

But though an eager pursuit tends to keep the mind in a state of vigorous and lively sensation, that pursuit only can give us the *maximum*, the highest possible degree of happiness, which has the following characters: It must be attended with the probability of success, consequently it must be generally successful; and it must also terminate in such gratifications as are least inconsistent with themselves, or with the other gratifications of which our nature makes us capable. And it may be demonstrated (though I shall not undertake to do it particularly in this place) that no pursuits answer to this description but those in which the love of mankind, the love of God, or the dictates of conscience, engage us.

For, in all other pursuits, such as those of sensual pleasure, the pleasures of imagination and ambition, we are liable to frequent disappointments; the gratifications in which they terminate are inconsistent with themselves, and with each other; and they almost entirely deaden and disqualify the mind for the nobler pleasures of our nature. It is the love of God, the love of mankind, and a sense of duty which engage the minds of men in the noblest of all pursuits. By these we are carried on with increasing alacrity and satisfaction. Even the pains and distresses in which we involve ourselves by these courses are preferable to the pleasures attending the gratification of our lower appetites.

Besides, these noble pursuits, generally at least, allow us even more of the lower gratifications of our nature than can be obtained by a direct pursuit of them; for a little experience will inform us, that we receive the most pleasure from these lower appetites of our nature, as well as from the highest sources of pleasure we are capable of, when we have their gratification least of all in view. There can be no doubt, for instance, but that the labourer who eats and drinks merely to satisfy the calls of hunger and thirst, has vastly more pleasure in eating and drinking than the epicure, who studies the pleasing of his palate.

They are the pleasures of benevolence and piety which most effectually carry us out of ourselves; whereas every other inferior pursuit suggests to us, in a thousand respects, the idea of *self*, the unseasonable intervention of which may be called the *worm* which lies *at the root* of all human bliss. And never can we be completely happy till we *love the Lord*

our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength, and our neighbour as ourselves. [*Matt.* xxii. 37, 39.]

This is the Christian *self-annihilation*, and a state of the most complete happiness to which our natures can attain; when, without having the least idea of being in the pursuit of our own happiness, our faculties are wholly absorbed in those noble and exalted pursuits in which we are sure not to be finally disappointed, and in the course of which we enjoy all the consistent pleasures of our whole nature. When *rejoicing with all that rejoice, weeping with all that weep*, and intimately associating the idea of God, the maker of all things, our father and our friend, with all the works of his hands, and all the dispensations of his providence, we constantly triumph in the comfortable sense of the Divine presence and approbation, and in the transporting prospect of advancing every day nearer to the accomplishment of his glorious purposes for the happiness of his creatures.

If this be the proper and supreme happiness of man, it may be asked of what use is the principle of self-interest? I answer, that though an attention to it be inconsistent with pure, unmixed happiness, yet a moderate attention to it is of excellent use in our progress towards it. It serves as a scaffold to a noble and glorious edifice, though it be unworthy of standing as any part of it. It is of more particular use to check and restrain the indulgence of our lower appetites and passions, before other objects and motives have acquired a sufficient power over us. But though we ought, therefore, to exhort those persons who are immersed in sensuality and gross vices, to abandon those indulgencies out of a regard to their true interest, it is advisable to withdraw this motive by degrees. However, as we shall never arrive at absolute perfection, we necessarily must, and indeed ought to be influenced by it, more or less, through the whole course of our existence, only less and less perpetually.

The principle of self-interest may be regarded as a medium between the lower and the higher principles of our nature, and, therefore, of principal use in our transition, as we may call it, from an imperfect to a more perfect state.

Perhaps the following view of this subject may be the easiest to us: A regard to our greatest happiness must necessarily govern our conduct with respect to all those virtues which are termed *private virtues*, as temperance, chastity, and every branch of self-government; but it always does harm as a motive to the *social virtues*. When, therefore,

self-government, which is our first step towards happiness, is established, we ought to endeavour to excite men to action by higher and nobler motives; for, with regard to all those virtues, the ultimate object of which is not private happiness, an attention to self-interest is of manifest prejudice to us, and this through the whole course of our lives, imperfect as we are, and as much occasion as we have for every effectual motive to virtue.

We are now come, in the last place, to see what considerations, drawn from the Holy Scriptures, will farther confirm and illustrate this maxim of human conduct, which was first suggested by them.

That the Scriptures join the voice of all nature around us, informing man that he is not made for himself; that they inculcate the same lesson which we learn both from a view of the external circumstances of mankind, and also from a nearer inspection of the principles of human nature, will be evident, whether we consider the object of the religion they exhibit, (that is, the temper to which we are intended to be formed by it,) or the motives by which it is enforced and recommended to us in them.

That the end and design of our holy religion, Christians, was to form us to the most disinterested benevolence, cannot be doubted by any person who consults the Holy Scriptures, and especially the books of the New Testament.

There we plainly see the principle of benevolence represented, when it is in its due strength and degree, as equal in point of intenseness to that of self-love. *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* The plain consequence of this is, that if all our brethren of mankind with whom we are connected, have an equal claim upon us, (since our connexions are daily growing more extensive, and we ourselves are, consequently, growing daily of less relative importance in our own eyes,) the principle of benevolence must, in the end, absolutely swallow up that of self-love.

The most exalted devotion, as even superior both to self-love and benevolence, is always every where recommended to us: and the sentiments of devotion have been shewn greatly to aid, and, in fact, to be the same with those of benevolence; and they must be so, unless it can be shewn that we have some senses, powers, or faculties, which respect the Deity only.

In order to determine men to engage in a course of disinterested and generous actions, every motive which is calculated to work upon human nature is employed. And as

mankind in general are deeply immersed in vice and folly; their hopes, but more especially their fears, are acted upon in the strongest manner by the prospect of rewards and punishments. Even temporal rewards and punishments were proposed to mankind in the earlier and ruder ages of the world. But as our notions of happiness grow more enlarged, infinitely greater, but indefinite objects of hope and fear are set before us. Something unknown, but something unspeakably dreadful in a future world is perpetually held up to us, as a guard against the allurements to vice and excess which the world abounds with; and still farther to counteract their baleful influences, the heavenly world (the habitation of good men after death) is represented to us as a place in which we shall be completely happy, enjoying something which is described as more than eye hath seen, ear heard, or than the heart of man can conceive.

These motives are certainly addressed to the principle of self-interest, urging us out of a regard to ourselves and our general happiness, *to cease to do evil, and learn to do well.* And, indeed, no motives of a more generous nature, and drawn from more distant considerations, can be supposed sufficient to influence the bulk of mankind, and *bring them from the power of sin and Satan unto God.*

But when, by the influence of these motives, it may be supposed that mankind are in some measure recovered from the grosser pollutions of the world, and the principle of self-interest has been played, as it were, against itself, and been a means of engaging us in a course and habit of actions which are necessarily connected with, and productive of, more generous and noble principles, then these nobler principles are those which the sacred writers chiefly inculcate.

Nothing is more frequent with the sacred writers than to exhort men to the practice of their duty as the command of God, from a principle of love to God, of love to Christ, and of love to mankind, more especially of our fellow-christians, and from a regard to the interest of our holy religion: motives which do not at all turn the attention of our minds upon themselves. This is not borrowing the aid of self-love to strengthen the principles of benevolence and piety, but it is properly deriving additional strength to these noble dispositions, as it were, from within themselves, independent of foreign considerations.

We may safely say, that no degree or kind of self-love is made use of in the Scriptures but what is necessary to raise us above that principle. And some of the more refined kinds

of self-love, how familiar soever they may be in some systems of morals, never come in sight there. We are never exhorted in the Scriptures to do benevolent actions for the sake of the reflex pleasures of benevolence, or pious actions with a view to the pleasures of devotion. This refined kind of self-love is no where to be found in the Scriptures.

Even the pleasures of a good conscience, though they be of a more general nature, and there be less refinement in them than in some other pleasures which are connected with the idea of *self*, and though they be represented in the Scriptures as the consequence of good actions, and a source of joy, as a testimony of a person's being in the favour of God, and in the way to happiness, are perhaps never directly proposed to us as the reward of virtue. This motive to virtue makes a greater figure in the system of the later Stoics (those Heathen philosophers who, in consequence of entertaining the most extravagant idea of their own merit, really idolized their own natures to a degree absolutely blasphemous) than in the Scriptures. And if we consider the nature of this principle, we shall soon be sensible that if it be inculcated as a motive to virtue, and particularly the virtues of a sublimer kind, it should be with great caution, and in such a manner as shall have the least tendency to encourage self-applause; for does not self-applause border very nearly upon pride and self-conceit, and that species of it which is called spiritual pride, and which is certainly a most malignant disposition?

If this same principle have power to excite such ridiculous vanity, intolerable arrogance, inveterate rancour, and supercilious contempt of others, when it has nothing but the trifling advantage of skill in criticism, a talent for poetry, a taste for *belles lettres*, or some other of the minuter parts of science to avail itself of; what have we not to dread from it, when it can boast of what is universally acknowledged to be a far superior kind of excellence?

To guard against this dangerous rock, so fatal to every genuine principle of virtue, the utmost humility, self-diffidence, and trust in God, are ever recommended to us in the Holy Scriptures. Good men are taught to regard him as the giver of every good and every perfect gift. They are represented as disclaiming all the merit of their own good works, and expecting all favour and happiness, private or public, from the free goodness and undeserved mercy of God. *When we have done all that is commanded us, we must*

say we are unprofitable servants; we have done only *that which it was our duty to do.* [*Luke* xvii. 10.]

In the representation which our Saviour has given us of the proceedings of the last great day of judgment, it is in this respect that the temper of the righteous is contrasted with that of the wicked, though that was not the principal design of the representation. The righteous seem surprised at the favourable opinion which their Judge expresses of them, and absolutely disclaim all the good works which he ascribes to them. [*Matt.* xxv. 37—39.] "When saw we thee," say they, "an hungred, and fed thee; or thirsty, and gave thee drink; when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in, or naked, and clothed thee; or when saw we thee sick and in prison, and came unto thee?" Whereas the wicked are represented as equally surprised at the censure our Lord passes upon them, and insist upon their innocence, saying, [*ver.* 44,] "When saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?"

This, too, is the excellent moral conveyed to us in the parable of the *Pharisee* and the *Publican*, and the import of one of the blessings which our Lord pronounced in a solemn manner at the beginning of his ministry on earth, [*Matt.* v. 3,] "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven;" and also the spirit of many of our Lord's invectives against the pride and hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees.

No other vice seems capable of disturbing the equal and generous temper of our Lord. Other vices rather excite his compassion, but pride, together with its usual attendant, hypocrisy, never fails to rouse his most vehement indignation: insomuch, that before we attend to the heinous nature and dreadful consequences of those vices, we are apt rather to blame our Lord for intemperate wrath upon these occasions, and to wonder why a person, who otherwise appears to be so meek, should, in this case only, be so highly provoked.

How severely doth he check the least tendency towards pride and ambition in his own disciples, whenever he discovers in any of them a disposition to aspire to distinction and superiority; closing his admonition, on one remarkable occasion, with these words, which are characteristic of the temper of his religion, *Matt.* xxiii. 11, 12: "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant. Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."

What temper can be supposed more proper to qualify us for joining the glorious assembly of the spirits of just men made perfect, and perhaps innumerable orders of beings far superior to us, both in understanding and goodness, when all the splendour of the invisible world shall be thrown open to us, but a spirit of the deepest humility, and the purest benevolence? This alone can dispose us truly to rejoice in the view of every kind and degree of excellence, wherever found, without the least uneasiness arising from pride, envy, jealousy, or dislike; all which vicious qualities of the mind are nearly connected together. And how can a spirit of true humility and pure benevolence, which cannot exist without humility, be attained, if our regards be perpetually, or frequently, directed to ourselves? Where *self* is considered, pride, vanity, or self-conceit, with all their hateful consequences, seem, in some degree, to be unavoidable.

Whoever, therefore, lays the foundation of human virtue on the principle of self-interest, or, what is nearly the same thing, self-applause, is erecting a fabric which can never rest on such supports; and he will be found, in fact, to have been pulling down with one hand what he was endeavouring to build up with the other.

To draw to a conclusion. This doctrine abounds with the noblest practical uses, and points out directly the great rule of life and source of happiness; which is to give ourselves wholly up to some employment, which may, if possible, engage all our faculties, and which tends to the good of society. This is a field which is open to the exertion of all human powers, and in which all mankind may be equally, mutually, and boundlessly happy.

This will render all expedients to *kill time*, unnecessary. With our affections and our faculties thus engrossed by a worthy object, we scarce need fear being ever dull, pensive, or melancholy, or know what it is to have our time hang heavy upon our hands. And I think I may so far presume upon the known connexion of mind and body, as to say that this is the best preservative against hypochondriacal disorders to which persons whose situation in the world doth not lead them into the active scenes of life, are peculiarly subject. Every day passed in the steady and earnest discharge of a man's known duty, will pass with uniform cheerfulness and alacrity. And in the glorious, animating prospect of a future happy state of mankind, on which, in a humble trust and confidence in the assistance and grace of God, he has spent all his cares, and exerted all his powers, that *joy* will spring

up in his heart here, which will hereafter be "unspeakable and full of glory." [1 *Peter* i. 8.]

If troubles and persecutions arise on account of our adhering to our duty; if we be opposed in the prosecution of laudable undertakings, or suffer in consequence of undertaking them; the true piety of a person who habitually lives to God, and not to himself, is capable of converting them all into pure, unmixed joy and transport. Then the human mind, roused to the most intense exertion of all its faculties, burdened with no consciousness of guilt, referring itself absolutely to the disposal of its God and Father, distrusting its own powers, and confiding in the infinite power, wisdom, and goodness of God, acquires a fervour of spirit, a courage, fortitude, and magnanimity, tempered with the most perfect serenity, and the greatest presence of mind, that is sufficient, and more than sufficient, to bear a man through every difficulty, and even to convert all pain into pleasure. His highly agitated state of mind, in those trying circumstances, is almost pure rapture and ecstasy.

In those circumstances, which appear so distressing, numbers, I doubt not, have been able, according to our blessed Saviour's direction, [*Luke* vi. 23,] to *rejoice and be exceeding glad, knowing that their reward was great in heaven;* and have experienced more real comfort, peace of mind, and inward joy, in the greatest adversity, than they had ever felt in the days of their prosperity. Yea, what is related by historians, of some Christian and Protestant martyrs, appears to me not incredible; namely, that in the midst of flames they have felt no pain.* Their minds were so intensely agitated, and so wholly occupied with opposite sensations, of the most exalted nature, as to exclude all external sensation whatever, vastly more than we can form any idea of from the trances and reveries which any person was ever subject to.

What the extraordinary exercises of devotion are able to do upon extraordinary occasions, the habitual, moderate exercise of piety, will be able to do in the ordinary course, and the common troubles of our lives; so that it may not only be compared to a strong cordial, to be applied when the mind is ready to faint under adversity, but to that food which is the daily support of our lives.

To have God always in our thoughts, is not possible in this world. Present objects, to the influence of which we are continually exposed, must necessarily engage a great

* See Vol. X. pp. 264, 265.

part of our attention; and worldly objects, by continually engrossing our thoughts, are apt to become of too great importance to us. We grow anxious about them, and our minds are harassed and fatigued with a constant and close attention to them. Now it is when the mind is in this state, or rather tending towards it, that the benign influences of devotion are, in the ordinary course of our lives, the most sensibly felt; when the mind, looking off, and above all worldly objects, and deeply impressed with a sense of the infinite power, wisdom, and goodness of God, unburdens itself of every anxiety, and casts all its cares upon its heavenly Father; and when the preceding tumult and disorder in the passions, only serves to augment that unspeakable joy, satisfaction, and confidence, with which a deep sense of the presence and providence of God inspires the soul.

The relief a benevolent mind feels from communicating its troubles and cares to an intimate friend, in whose wisdom and integrity he can confide, though of the same nature, is but a faint image of what the truly pious soul feels in the delightful seasons of the devout intercourse which he maintains with his God.

This is a perpetual source of joy and satisfaction to a truly devout mind, which the wicked, those persons who live to themselves, and not to mankind or to God intermeddle not with. Not even an idea of that sweet tranquillity, exalted joy, and calm fortitude which true devotion inspires, can be communicated to another who hath had no experience of it himself. This is truly of those things which St. Paul says, [1 *Cor.* ii. 14,] "the natural man" cannot *comprehend*, and that "they are foolishness to him, because they are spiritually discerned."

I would be no advocate for enthusiasm. The fervour of devotion cannot always be kept up. That is inconsistent with the condition of our nature, and far from being necessary in our present state: but that cheerful serenity and composure in which moderate acts of devotion leave the mind, is an excellent temper for entering upon, and persevering with spirit and alacrity, in any useful and honourable undertaking.

The sum of this practical doctrine, suggested by revelation, and confirmed by reason and observation, is, *that no man can be happy who lives to himself; but that true happiness consists in having our faculties wholly engrossed by some worthy object, in the pursuit of which the strongest and best of our affections have their full play, and in which we enjoy*

all the consistent pleasures of our whole nature; that though a regard to our greatest happiness be of excellent use, particularly about the beginning of our progress towards perfection and happiness, in bringing our inferior appetites and passions into due subjection to the superior powers of our nature, yet that self-love, and a regard to ourselves, is very apt to grow too intense, and is, in fact, the cause of a great deal of the useless anxiety, perplexity, and misery there is in the world; and that, therefore, it ought to be our care, that our minds be engrossed as much as possible by other objects; and that even motives to virtue, which turn our attention frequently upon ourselves, should be used with caution; for fear of feeding that vanity and self-conceit, which we ought to study every method of repressing, as the greatest bane of true religion, being most opposite to the genuine temper of Christianity, and the most destructive of human happiness.

I cannot make a better application of this general maxim of conduct, namely, to propose to ourselves, and, in the language of Solomon, *to pursue with all our might*, some worthy object, some honourable and useful employment, especially in the present circumstances of things among us, than in encouraging you, my brethren in the ministry, to prosecute with vigour that excellent scheme in which you have already shewed so much laudable zeal, and have made so successful a progress. I need not add, that I mean the scheme of a provision for the more comfortable support of ministers' widows and orphans.

This particular subject has the easiest and happiest connexion imaginable with the general one I have been discussing; as it is both a worthy and benevolent undertaking itself, and is designed for the relief of those persons who have shewn themselves to be actuated by the same excellent sentiments; of persons who have not lived to themselves, but to society; who have entered into the social connexions of life, and who have exposed themselves and families to peculiar hardships in consequence of those honourable connexions.

If any set of duties shine with peculiar lustre, and make a greater figure than the rest, in our holy religion, they are those of humanity and compassion. Through all the books both of the *Old* and *New Testament*, they are the most frequently and the most earnestly inculcated of any particular duties: doubtless, because they are of the strongest obligation in themselves, the finest exercise for our faculties,

(having the greatest tendency to advance the perfection of our nature,) and the best adapted to promote the ease and happiness of mankind in general.

The Divine Being himself is always represented as taking particular notice of the treatment which the poor and distressed meet with. He hath styled himself *the Father of the fatherless, and the widow's God;* and therefore, when we undertake those humane and kind offices, we may with more propriety than in any other sphere consider ourselves as acting the glorious part of God's deputies, and as stewards of the Divine grace and goodness here below.

If we be obliged to contribute of our substance to the relief of the distressed, much more is it incumbent upon us not to withhold our labour and our interest, in the prosecution of proper schemes for their relief. And the method in which it is proposed to relieve the distressed persons we have now under consideration, is one that is quite free from all the difficulties which lie in the way of common charities, (though the objections to common charities have no weight in this particular case,) and a method which is, in all cases, the most eligible, when it can be pursued with effect; namely, to put those persons whose circumstances are distressing, or liable to be so, in the way of relieving themselves. It is to exert our humanity in the way of encouraging, if not industry, at least frugality.

This, consequently, is a method which will relieve the minds of the distressed of a burthen which is often less tolerable than most kinds of calamity, namely, the sense of dependence and obligation. It may be a false kind of delicacy which makes some persons so extremely sensible upon these occasions; but it is a sensibility which only the most amiable and deserving persons are subject to; and there is certainly a peculiar propriety in attending to this circumstance in the case before us.

Who are, generally, the unhappy widows whose case we are now considering, but persons who have been brought up in easy and genteel circumstances, and whose small fortunes, joined to the income of their husbands, and managed with great frugality, have been just sufficient to bring up a family in that decent and reputable manner which a regard to their station in life, and to the congregations in whose service their husbands were engaged, are universally acknowledged to require. These unhappy persons, therefore, are reduced at once, upon the death of their husbands, and the great reduction, if not total ceasing of their incomes,

(which is the immediate consequence of that event,) to one of the most distressing situations that can occur in human life.

Here is to be seen the deepest affliction for the loss of that companion and friend for whose sake they had sacrificed perhaps better prospects, and in situations in which it would have been more in their power to support themselves and families in the like circumstances; the greatest indigence, to which they have never been accustomed, with which they are therefore wholly unprepared to encounter, and which, in their time of life, they are utterly incapable of remedying; and all this joined with that generosity of sentiment, inspired by their education, and cherished by the company and acquaintance they have always kept up, to which relief itself is distressing, unless conferred with the greatest prudence and delicacy.

To augment the distress of these disconsolate widows, they see nothing before them but a number of children educated in the same decent and frugal manner in which their parents were obliged to live, with expectations (if they be of an age capable of having any) almost unavoidably above their rank and fortune, wholly unprovided for, and destitute, in a great measure, of their father's interest and friendships, on which were founded all their expectations of being introduced with tolerable prospects into the world.

Here then, my brethren, are the worthiest objects of charity, and here is the most unexceptionable and desirable method of bestowing it; so that no circumstance seems wanting to engage every benevolent and public-spirited person to join heartily in a scheme which is calculated for so excellent a purpose.

Consider, my brethren, how many worthy persons are anxious about the prudence and the vigour of your present resolutions; with what tender and heart-piercing concern the worthy and pious parent regards the wife of his bosom, and the children of his love, when he feels the symptoms of his own declining nature, and dreads to communicate the alarming intelligence; and how earnestly he wishes it may be in his power to do something, while living, which, when he is dead, may be the means of providing a small substitute for the fruit of his present labours; when, alas! no substitute can be provided for himself, for his advice, his instructions, his consolations, the charms of his conversation and all his personal kind offices. Of what a load of anxiety and distress, which tends to hasten the dreaded event, would this

scheme ease the worthiest and most considerate of human minds!

Consider, also, how many persons, the best qualified to bear their parts with propriety and honour in social life, and to exhibit the finest example of the several relative and domestic duties to others, and who are thereby capable of having their own usefulness greatly extended, are restrained from engaging in social connexions by that peculiar tenderness and humanity which a liberal education, and a life devoted to the service of a benevolent religion, inspires; and also by that very prudence which would eminently contribute to their fulfilling the most important duties of it, in the most exemplary manner.

So excellent an undertaking will, doubtless, be its own sufficient reward; and if "the fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," [*James* v. 16,] what good may you not reasonably expect that the devout blessings and fervent prayers of the many excellent persons interested in your present resolutions will procure you, from that God who "is able to make all grace abound towards you," [2 *Cor.* ix. 8,] and *to supply all your wants, out of his abundant fulness in Christ Jesus!*

Let *us* then, my brethren, "be stedfast and unmoveable" in this, as well as "always abounding *in every good work;* forasmuch as *we* know that *our* labour *shall not be* in vain in the Lord." [1 *Cor.* xv. 58.]

OF THE DANGER OF BAD HABITS.*

HOSEA iv. 17:

Ephraim is joined to idols. Let him alone.

EPHRAIM is here put for the whole kingdom of Israel, of which it was a part; and this awful sentence pronounced upon it was delivered during its declension, and not long before its final dissolution by the kings of Assyria.

Many prophets had God sent to this unhappy nation, and by repeated messages had he expostulated with them, from time to time, for their crying wickedness and provocations. They had had *line upon line*, and *precept upon precept;* but all had been to no purpose. They shewed no sign

* This Sermon, and the four following, were first published in 1787. See *supra*, p. 3.

of repentance, but *held fast their iniquity, and would not let it go*, till the Divine patience and forbearance were wearied out. Mercy could plead for them no longer; their fate was determined; and the execution of the just judgments of God upon them was only delayed, but was sure to take place in the end.

This is the case of a whole nation abandoned of God in this fearful manner. But whatever has been the case of one nation, may not only be the case of another nation, but also that of any *individual;* and it is the possibility of this being the case of our own nation, or of ourselves, that makes it to demand our attention. To the Almighty, with respect to moral government, a nation is as one man, and one man as a whole nation. He punishes vice, and he rewards virtue, in both; and whatever is agreeable to wisdom and equity in the case of a nation, is likewise agreeable to wisdom and equity with respect to individuals. Supposing, therefore, that the cases are exactly similar, I shall, in discoursing from these words,

1. State the case with as much exactness as I can;
2. Shew the probability and danger of it with respect to human nature; and,
3. Consider the equity and propriety of it with respect to God, applying the whole doctrine to the cases of individuals.

In the first place, I am to state this case with as much exactness as I can.

In general, when any person is in the condition of *Ephraim*, in my text, so that God shall, as it were, say of him, *he is joined to idols*, (he is joined to his lusts and vices,) *Let him alone*, his day of trial and probation may be said to be, to all important purposes, expired. He is no longer *a subject of moral government*, because he is utterly incapable of *amendment*, which is the end of all moral discipline; and though, through the goodness of God, which is over all his works, he may live many years longer, yet his final doom is in reality fixed; his sentence is irrevocable, and the execution of it only deferred.

Not that the reformation of any sinner is ever *naturally impossible*, or that, if he truly repent, he shall not find favour at the hand of God: for *nothing is impossible with God*, and *a truly humble, penitent and contrite heart he will never despise*, whenever, and wheresoever he finds it. But the change may be *morally impossible*, or not to be expected according to the

usual course of things; and this is sufficient to authorize us to make use of the language.

Supposing a man to have lived so long in the habits of vice, as to have lost all relish for every thing that is good, that he has no pleasure in the company of the sober, the virtuous and the pious, but only in that of those who are as abandoned as himself, and that the greatest satisfaction he has is in corrupting others, (and farther than this depravity cannot go,) supposing that, in the course of his life, this man, besides every advantage for *instruction*, had experienced a great variety of prosperity and adversity; and yet that prosperity, instead of making him more thankful and obedient to God, made him forget him the more; and that afflictions, instead of softening and bettering his heart, only served to harden it and make it worse. Do I say that this abandoned wretch *cannot* be reformed, that God cannot, by any methods whatever, work upon his heart, and bring him to serious thought and reflection? By no means.—That would be to limit the power of God, to whom all things are possible. He can work *miracles*, if he should think proper so to do. But then I say this would be a proper miracle, such as, at this day, we are not authorized to expect. And judging by what we see actually to take place, and what we must conclude to be just and right, God *may*, and probably *will*, leave such a one to himself. He may determine to try him no longer by any of those methods of his providence which are usually employed for the purpose of reclaiming sinners.

For instance, afflictions, and especially bodily sickness, are a great means of softening and bettering the minds of men; but God may resolve that he shall be visited with no remarkable sickness, till he be overtaken with his last; or he may cut him off by a sudden and unexpected death, in the midst of his crimes. The death of our friends, or any calamities befalling them, have often been the means, in the hands of Divine Providence, of bringing to serious thought and reflection those who have survived those strokes; but God may resolve never to touch him in so tender a part, but rather make use of his death as a warning and example to others.

Now when a man is thus *left of God*, and no providential methods are used to reclaim him, we may conclude that he is irrecoverably lost. It is, in fact, and according to the course of nature, (and we know of no deviations from it since the age of the apostles,) absolutely impossible that he should

repent, or be reformed. And though he should continue to live ever so long after God has thus forsaken him, he is only, in the awful language of Scripture, treasuring up "wrath against the day of wrath;" and there remains nothing for him but "a fearful looking-for of judgment," and of that *fiery indignation* which shall consume the *adversaries* of God. [*Rom.* ii. 5; *Heb.* x. 27.]

Having thus stated the nature of this awful case, and shewn in what sense, and on what account, it may be said that it is quite desperate and hopeless, viz. because it may be morally impossible that he should ever truly repent and be reformed, by reason of God's withdrawing those providential methods by which he uses to work upon men's hearts, and to bring them to serious thought and reflection, I come,

2dly. To consider the *probability* and *danger* of the case with respect to human nature; how far men are liable to fall into this fearful condition, and by what means they fall into it.

A man's case may be pronounced to be thus desperate, when his mind is brought into such a state, as that the necessary means of reformation shall have lost their effect upon him; and this is the natural consequence of confirmed habits of vice, and a long-continued neglect of the means of religion and virtue, which is so far from being an impossible or improbable case, that it is a very general one.

In order to be the more sensible of this, you are to consider that vice is a *habit*, and therefore of a subtle and insinuating nature. By easy, pleasing, and seemingly harmless actions, men are often betrayed into a *progress* which grows every day more alarming. Our virtuous resolutions we may break with difficulty. It may be with pain and reluctance that we commit the *first acts* of sin, but the *next* are easier to us; and use, custom, and habit, will at last reconcile us to any thing, even things the very idea of which might at first be shocking to us.

Vice is a thing not to be trifled with. You may, by the force of vigorous resolution, break off in the early stages of it; but *habits*, when they have been confirmed and long continued, are obstinate things to contend with, and are hardly ever entirely subdued. When bad habits *seem* to be overcome, and we think we have got rid of our chains, they may perhaps only have become, as it were, *invisible;* so that when we thought we had recovered our freedom and strength, so as to be able to repel any temptation, we may lose all power of resistance on the first approach of it.

A man who has contracted a habit of vice, and been abandoned to sinful courses for some time, is never out of danger. He is exactly in the case of a man who has long laboured under a chronical disease, and is perpetually subject to a relapse. The first shock of any disorder a man's constitution may bear; and, if he be not naturally subject to it, he may perfectly recover, and be out of danger. But when the general habit is such, as that a *relapse* is apprehended, a man's friends and physicians are alarmed for him.

The reason is, that a relapse does not find a person in the condition in which he was when the first fit of illness seized him. That gave his constitution a shock, and left him enfeebled, so as to be less able to sustain another shock; and especially if it be more violent than the former, as is generally the case in those disorders.

In the very same dangerous situation is the man who has ever been addicted to vicious courses. He can never be said to be *perfectly recovered*, whatever appearances may promise, but is always in danger of a fatal relapse. He ought, therefore, to take the greatest care of himself. He is not in the condition of a person who has *never known the ways of wickedness*. He ought, therefore, to have the greatest distrust of himself, and set a double watch over his thoughts, words, and actions, for fear of a surprise. For if once, through the force of any particular temptation, he should fall back into his former vicious courses, and his former disposition should return, his case will probably be desperate. He will plunge himself still deeper in wickedness; and his having abstained for a time, will only, as it were, have whetted his appetite, and make him swallow down the poison of sin by larger and more eager draughts than ever.

Such persons may be so entirely in the power of vicious habits, that they shall be in no sense *their own masters*. They may even see the danger they are in, wish to free themselves from the habits they have contracted, and yet find they have no force, or resolution, to relieve themselves. They are not to be rescued from *the snare of the destroyer*, and brought to their *right mind*, but by some uncommon and alarming providence, which is in the hands of God, and which he may justly withhold, when his patience and long-suffering have been much abused. Justly may he say to such an habitual sinner, as he did to *Ephraim* in my text, *He is joined to idols*, he is joined to his lusts, *let him alone*.

He is determined to have *the pleasure of sin*, let him receive *the wages of sin* also.

This brings me to the third head of my Discourse, in which I propose to consider the equity of the proceeding with respect to God.

It may be said that it is not agreeable to equity, for God to favour some with the means of improvement, and suffer others to abandon themselves to destruction, without a possibility of escaping. But I answer, that the persons whose case I have been describing, have had, and have outlived, their *day of grace*. God has long exercised forbearance towards them, but they have wearied it out; and it could not be expected to last for ever. They have had gracious invitations to repentance, but they have slighted them all: *they stopped their ears*, and *refused to return*. They have been tried with a great variety both of merciful and of afflictive providences, but they made no good use of them. *Why then*, as the prophet [*Isa.* i. 5] says, *should they be stricken any more, when they will only revolt more and more?*

A day of trial and probation, or what is frequently called *a day of grace*, must necessarily have some period. Else when would the time of retribution, when would the time of rewards and punishments take place? A state of trial necessarily respects some future state, in which men must receive according to their deeds. But this state of trial it has pleased God to make of uncertain duration; no doubt, to keep us always watchful, having our accounts always in readiness, because *in such an hour as we think not, our Lord may come*, and require them. The state of trial, therefore, is with some, of much longer duration than it is with others; and God is the sovereign arbiter of every thing relating to it. He makes our lives longer or shorter, as seems good in his sight, and at death, a state of trial ends of course. We may, therefore, as well pretend to question the justice and equity of God's cutting us off by death when and in what manner he pleases, as arraign his justice in sealing up our doom, though while we live, whenever he pleases.

No doubt God gives to every person a sufficient trial; for, "he is not willing that any should perish, but *had rather* that all should come to repentance." [2 *Pet.* iii. 9.] We may, therefore, assure ourselves, that he will not cease to endeavour to promote the reformation of a sinner by all proper means, till he shall become absolutely incorrigible, and the methods taken to reclaim him would be abused and lost. And if we consider that every means of improvement

neglected, adds to a man's guilt, and aggravates his condemnation, it may even appear to be mercy in the Divine Being to grant a person no farther means of improvement, after it has been found, by actual trial, that they would only have been abused, and therefore have proved highly injurious to him. Not but that it might have been sufficient to silence every cavil of this kind, to say, as *Paul* does [*Rom.* ix. 20] on a similar occasion, "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God;" or with *Abraham*, [*Gen.* xviii. 25,] "Shall not the judge of all the earth do *that which is* right?" But it is proper to shew, that, *in the midst of judgment, God remembers mercy.*

There is a very pathetic description of the case of a sinner who, after a relapse into vicious courses, is justly abandoned of God to seek his own destruction, in a parable of our Saviour's, formed upon the popular opinion of the Jews of his age concerning *demons*, or evil spirits, *Matt.* xii. 43—45: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in, and dwell there, and the last state of that man is worse than the first." The application of this parable either to the case of the Jews (for whom it seems to have been originally intended) or to particular persons, who, after a seeming reformation, have relapsed into vicious courses, is too obvious to be particularly dwelt upon.

To come, therefore, to a general application of this doctrine: Let all persons who are sensible of the folly and evil of sinful courses, and of the danger of persisting in them, make a speedy and effectual retreat. Let us do nothing by halves. To be lukewarm in religion, is, in effect, to have no religion at all. We must give God *our hearts;* we must give him an undivided affection; for *we cannot truly love God, and mammon*, or the world, at the same time. In this unsettled and fluctuating disposition, temptations will have a great advantage over us. We shall ever be in danger of throwing off all restraint, and of running into every kind of riot and excess, till nothing on the part of Divine Providence shall occur to reclaim us.

In reality, my brethren, and to every valuable end and purpose, the term of our trial and probation does generally expire long before the term of our natural lives. For how

few are there whose *characters*, whose *dispositions*, or *habits of mind*, undergo any considerable change after they are grown to man's estate! Our *tempers* and general characters are usually fixed as soon as we have fixed ourselves in a regular employment and mode of life; for, after this, we see almost every person continue the very same to the end of his life. Some remarkable providential occurrence, some fit of sickness, or some unforeseen misfortune of any kind, may alarm those who have been addicted to vicious courses, and for a time, bring them to serious thought and reflection; but if they be turned thirty or forty years of age, how soon do the serious purposes, which they then form, go off, and their former modes of thinking and living return! Not only with respect to *temper* and *disposition of mind*, as it relates to virtue or vice, but with respect to those habits which are indifferent to morals, we see that, excepting one case perhaps in a thousand, they are not subject to change after the period that I have mentioned. Any habits that we contract early in life, any particular bias or inclination, any particular cast of thought, or mode of conversation, even any particular gesture of body, as in walking, sitting, &c. we are universally known by among our acquaintance, from the time that we properly *enter life*, to the time that we have done with it; as much as we are by the tone of our voice, or our hand-writing, which, likewise, are of the nature of *habits* or *customs*.

These observations may be applied in a great measure even to matters of opinion, (though, naturally, nothing seems to be more variable,) as well as to mental and corporeal habits. A man who has studied, or who fancies he has studied, any particular subject, sooner or later *makes up his mind*, as we say, with respect to it; and after this, all arguments, intended to convince him of his mistake, only serve to confirm him in his chosen way of thinking. An argument, or evidence of any kind, that is entirely new to a man, may make a proper impression upon him; but if it has been often proposed to him, and he has had time to view and consider it, so as to have hit upon any method of evading the force of it, he is aftewards quite callous to it, and can very seldom be prevailed upon to give it any proper attention. This consideration accounts, in some measure, both for the great influence of Christianity on its first publication, when the doctrines were *new* and *striking*, and also for the absolute indifference with which the same great truths are now heard in all Christian countries.

It accounts also for the more striking effect of the preaching of the Methodists, than ours. They find people utterly ignorant, to whom the truths, the promises, and the threatenings of the gospel are really *new;* whereas we have to do with persons who have heard them from their infancy, and have, alas! acquired a habit of disregarding them. But then our people having, in general, been brought up in habits of virtue, such great changes of character and conduct are less necessary in their case. It is to be regretted, however, that they too seldom exceed that mediocrity of character which they acquire in early life. I speak of the generality among us; for others are remarkable exceptions, persons of *disinterested and heroic virtue*, in full proportion to the superior advantages which they enjoy.

The resistance which the mind makes to the admission of truth, when it has been strongly prejudiced against it, is evident both with respect to the belief of Christianity in general, and of particular opinions relating to it. There are many persons by no means defective with respect to *judgment* in other things, of whose conversion to Christianity we can have no more reasonable expectation, than of the sun rising in the west, even though they should consent to hear or read every thing that we could propose to them for that purpose. There are also many conscientious and intelligent Roman Catholics, absurd as we justly think their principles to be, who would deliberately read the best defences of Protestantism without any other effect than that of being more confirmed in their prejudices against it. The same may be said of persons professing other modes of faith, so that their persuasions are not to be changed, except by such a method as that which was applied for the conversion of the apostle Paul. The same observation may also be applied to many opinions, and especially to a *general bias* or *turn of thinking* in matters of a political nature, and even in subjects of philosophy or criticism.

Facts of this kind, of which we are all witnesses, and which come within the observation of every day in our lives, shew, in a very striking light, what care we ought to take in forming our *first judgments* of things, and in contracting our *first habits*, and therefore deserve the more especial attention of *young persons;* for we see that when these *principles* and *habits* are once properly formed, they are generally fixed for life. Whatever is fact with respect to *mankind in general*, we ought to conclude to be the case with respect to *ourselves;* that the cause is in the constitu-

tion of our *common nature*, and dependent upon the fundamental laws of it, and, no doubt, a wise and useful part of it; and we must not expect that *miracles* will be wrought in our favour.

To shew that there is the greatest advantage, as well as some inconvenience, resulting from this *disposition to fixity*, as we call it, in our own nature, let it be observed, that if there was nothing *fixed* or *permanent* in the *human character*, we should find the same inconvenience as if any other law of nature was unsettled. We should be perpetually at a loss how to conduct ourselves, how to behave to mankind in general, and even to our own particular friends and acquaintance, especially after having been for any space of time absent from them. We do not expect to find persons the very same in all changes of condition or circumstances, as in sickness and health, prosperity and adversity, &c.; but then we generally know what *kind of change* to expect in them in those circumstances, and we regulate our conduct towards them by our experience of the usual effect of similar changes.

These observations, when applied to *opinions*, may serve to amuse us, but when they are applied to *practice*, they ought seriously to alarm us. Let all those, therefore, who being at all advanced in life, see reason to be dissatisfied with themselves, with their disposition of mind, and their general conduct, be alarmed; for there is certainly the greatest reason for it, probably much more than they are themselves aware of. Persons in this state of mind always flatter themselves with a time when they shall have more leisure for repentance and reformation; but, judging from observation on others, which is the surest guide that they can follow, (infinitely better than their own imaginations,) they may conclude that it is almost a certainty that such a time will never come.

If they should have the *leisure* for repentance and reformation which they promised themselves, it is not probable that sufficient *strength of resolution* will come along with it. Indeed, all resolutions to repent at a future time are necessarily insincere, and must be a mere deception, because they imply a preference of a man's present habits and conduct, that he is really *unwilling* to change them, and that nothing but necessity would lead him to make any attempt of the kind. In fact, he can only mean that he will discontinue *particular actions*, his *habits* or *temper of mind* remaining the same.

Besides, a real, effectual repentance or reformation is such a total change in a man as cannot, in the nature of things, take place in a short space of time. A man's habits are formed by the scenes he has gone through, and the impressions which they have made upon him; and when death approaches, a man has not another life, like this, to live over again. He may, even on a death-bed, most sincerely *wish* that he had a pious and benevolent disposition, with the love of virtue in all its branches: but that *wish*, though it be ever so sincere and earnest, can no more produce a proper change in his mind, than it can restore him to health, or make him taller or stronger than he is.

The precise time when this confirmed state of mind takes place, or, in the language of Scripture, the time when any person is thus *left of God*, or *left to himself*, cannot be determined. It is necessarily various and uncertain. But in general we may say, that when any person has been long abandoned to vicious courses, when vice is grown into a habit with him, and especially when his vices are more properly of *a mental nature*, such as a disposition to *envy*, *malice*, or *selfishness*, (which are the most inveterate, the most difficult to be eradicated of all vices,) when neither health nor sickness, prosperity nor adversity; when neither a man's own reflections, the remonstrances of his friends, nor admonitions from the pulpit, have any visible effect upon him; when, after this, we see no great change in his worldly affairs or connexions, but he goes on from day to day, from month to month, and from year to year, without any sensible alteration, there is reason to fear that he is fallen into this *fatal security*, that he is, as it were, *fallen asleep*, and that this sleep will be *the sleep of death*.

However, a shadow of hope is not to be despised. One chance in a thousand is still a chance; and there are persons whose vigour of mind is such, that, when sufficiently roused, they are equal to almost any thing. Let those, therefore, who see their danger at any time of life, be *up and doing*, *working out their salvation with fear and trembling*, *that*, if possible, *they may flee from the wrath to come.**

* This Sermon and the preceding Sermons on *The Importance of Free Inquiry*, on *Habitual Devotion*, and on *The Duty of not Living to Ourselves*, were reprinted by the *Unitarian Society* in *Tracts*, 1791, III. pp. 73—216.

The Duty

OF

NOT BEING ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL.

ROMANS i. 16:

I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth.

THIS was written by the apostle Paul at Corinth, when he had formed a design of visiting Rome, the metropolis of the empire, the seat of power, and of course the resort of the ambitious, and also of the learned, and, in general, of all persons who had any hopes of distinguishing themselves on the great theatre of the world. There this apostle wished to have an opportunity of preaching the gospel, after having propagated it with success in the principal cities of *Asia Minor* and *Greece;* in his travels for which purpose, though he had suffered much, he had met with nothing that had made him repent of his undertaking, or had led him to be ashamed of his commission. He now discovered as little apprehension on the idea of going to Rome, and was as little ashamed to preach the gospel even there.

There was something peculiarly great and magnanimous in these sentiments and this conduct of the apostle, of which we shall be sensible, if we consider the circumstances in which he wrote. Christianity was then a *new* religion, professed comparatively by very few; and of those few, not many were rich, powerful, or learned. By such persons as these it was generally viewed in an unfavourable light, interfering with their favourite gratifications and pursuits, so that both among Jews and Gentiles it was a "sect every where spoken against," and the preachers of it were hated, as those who came *to turn the world upside down.* Paul had been at *Athens*, the great seat of learning and of education in the ancient world: but the language of the philosophers there was, "What will this babbler (or this *dealer in new and uncouth words)* say?" [*Acts* xvii. 18.] After a hearing before the *Areopagus*, the most respectable court of judicature in Athens, or in all Greece, though, with much address, he avoided giving any particular offence, he made very few converts; and though he continued there some months, we do not hear of any Christian church at Athens in his time.

This, indeed, was the first time that the gospel had been preached at Athens; whereas at Rome, to which there was a constant resort of persons of all professions, from every part of the empire, there were already Christians, and in numbers sufficient to constitute *a church*, at the time of Paul's writing this epistle, and to that church it is addressed. But still the number of Christians in Rome must have borne a very small proportion to the inhabitants of the place. In these circumstances, the apostle could have had no very flattering prospect before him, when he thought of visiting the Metropolis. He had many and great difficulties in view, and hardly any thing, with respect to this life, to enable him to bear them. The attachment of a very few persons, and those very much divided amongst themselves, was all that he had with which to balance the contempt of the learned and the great, the rude insolence of the mob, and perhaps hardships and persecutions of a more serious kind. Notwithstanding this, the apostle declares that he should not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, or afraid to preach it in the most public manner; for that must likewise have been his resolution.

Our circumstances are, no doubt, considerably different from those of the apostle. Christianity is now the religion of the country in which we live, and the open profession of it lies under no odium. It cannot, therefore, be a just ground of boasting in any man to say that he is not ashamed of it. Even those who, by their writings, wish to undermine and discredit Christianity, do it under the pretence of being friends to it. In many respects, however, the serious profession of pure Christianity, free from those corruptions and abuses which have been unhappily introduced into it, and have become incorporated with it in all the public establishments of it, and in some cases even the profession of Christianity itself (and still more a life and conversation governed by the strict rules of it) is disliked, and, therefore *disreputable;* so that it may require no small degree of fortitude in a man uniformly to avow his serious belief of it and his strict adherence to it.

In this Christian country, the Christianity of the greater number is only a secondary consideration with them. The great objects with the bulk of mankind are pleasure, profit, or honour. Religion, by which I mean a regard to God and a future life, is so little thought of or attended to by them, that it is no sensible check to their pursuits, and enforces no moderation in their gratifications. Consequently,

a man who thinks, who feels, and who acts as really becomes a Christian, who *sets God always before him*, whose views are primarily directed to a future life, and who habitually considers himself as *a pilgrim and stranger here below*, is a character of which they have no conception. Such views, and a conduct governed by them, they cannot enter into. To them, therefore, it must appear either *folly* or *hypocrisy*, and of course will be treated by them with contempt or hatred. Their being nominally Christians themselves will not make them look with more respect upon those who are truly and practically so.

If we look back a century or two, we shall see that the hatred and contempt with which the Reformers from Popery abroad, and the Puritans in this country, were treated by those who called themselves Christians, was not exceeded by that which the Jews and the Gentiles in general entertained for Christianity at the first promulgation of it.

By great numbers also, and especially in the most distinguished ranks of society, the rich, the great, and the speculative, Christianity itself is disbelieved, and even despised; so that any person who makes a serious profession of it will, by them, be treated with contempt. In such company, therefore, it must require some courage for a man to declare himself to be a Christian, and especially a serious one, with views in his conduct quite different from those with whom he associates.

On these accounts, it may not be improper or unseasonable to exhort Christians themselves, and in this Christian country, not to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, by informing them of the reasons why, in these circumstances, or in any circumstances, they ought, on the contrary, to value themselves upon it, and to consider the profession of it as their greatest happiness and honour. Now, my Christian brethren, we shall be sensible that we have no reason to be ashamed of the gospel, but the greatest reason to glory in it, when we consider what it is *in itself*, not what it has, by too many, been *imagined* to be, and what is the great object and use of it.

Men of reason will be governed by reason, or just views of things, and will not be influenced by the opinions of those who have taken no pains in forming them, but have taken them up lightly, and on insufficient grounds, which you will find to be the case with all those who despise, or affect to despise, Christianity. This apostle, who had been strongly prejudiced against it, who had even persecuted it,

but whom the most convincing evidence (and, in his case, nothing less than the most convincing would have been sufficient) had made a convert to it, who had, in the midst of much opposition, and with great labour and hazard, preached it many years, says, [*Rom.* i. 16,] that "it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth." In other words, it is a scheme which Divine wisdom has adopted, as the most effectual to deliver men from superstition and vice, and to prepare them for future glory. And *this* is certainly nothing of which any man, any truly sensible and wise man, need to be ashamed, in whatever light it may appear to the unthinking world, or in what manner soever, from ignorance or malice, they may treat the professors of it.

That mankind are subject to *error*, and also to *vice*, we who are men ourselves cannot but know and experience. This liableness to error and vice is, indeed, necessary in a state of *trial*, in which great characters, characters fitted for great and excellent future purposes, are to be formed. Many, alas *the many*, the great bulk of mankind, are fatally entangled in error and vice. They are struck with the appearances of things, which present themselves to their view, and which prompt them to immediate gratification; and, looking no farther, they abandon themselves to the pursuit of them. By this means their characters are debased, and having no respect to God, or a future life, their conduct, corresponding to their low and grovelling views, will be such as, though viewed with too much indulgence by men like themselves, is a disgrace to their rational nature; neither making them truly happy here, nor qualifying them for happiness hereafter.

Now the precepts and maxims of the gospel, and especially the future prospects which it opens to us, are calculated to conduct us with safety through the snares of the world, and to give us a happy exit out of it. They give us just views of things, of our condition and duty here, and of our expectations hereafter; by which means they guard us against destructive errors, they lead to the practice of universal virtue, and form us for a happy immortality.

Christianity gives us just views of the relation in which all the human race stands to God, our common parent, of his gracious designs in training us up, as in a school of moral discipline, for future glory and happiness. It consequently teaches us to consider all mankind as *brethren*. It holds out to us all, the same great prospects, a state of happiness open to all, and sufficient to content all; and thereby cuts

up, as by the roots, all that envy and jealousy, which, being the parents of our first vices, are the bane of our comfort in this life, as well as disqualify us for the enjoyment of another. This excites a generous emulation to be virtuous ourselves, and, at the same time, to promote the virtue of others. It teaches us to consider one another as *fellow-soldiers* in the same cause and warfare, and thereby prompts us to be ready to yield each other every assistance in our power, to attain the great end of our common faith, to guard against our common dangers, and to secure our common reward. There are no principles comparable to the Christian ones, for inspiring a nobly disinterested benevolence, and leading to a truly heroic conduct.

Christianity exalts the dignity of man, and inspires great and generous sentiments, by teaching us to have a constant respect to God; exhibiting him to us as the greatest and best of Beings, the author of nature, and the father of mankind; who never deserts his offspring; but with the most gracious intention, plans all the events of our lives; without whose will, nothing can ever befal us, and who designs every thing for the best.

Let things, therefore, appear ever so discouraging, they give no alarm or distrust to the true Christian. He respects the providence of his God and Father in the most afflictive, as well as in the most prosperous events of his life; and is confident that, if his own conduct be proper to his circumstances, it will hereafter appear that there was equal wisdom, and equal kindness, in the appointment of them. The true Christian can, therefore, *rejoice* even *in tribulation*, knowing with the apostle, [*Rom.* v. 3—5,] that "tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope," even that hope which "maketh not ashamed," that hope and joy which are sufficient to bear him up under, and carry him through, any difficulties, even the pains of death, with all its terrors.

In death, the true Christian *rejoices in hope of the glory of God.* For though the "earthly house of *his* tabernacle *be* dissolved, *he has* an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." [2 *Cor.* v. 1.] It is the great prerogative of *the gospel*, that it *brings life and immortality to light;* thereby giving us a prospect of something infinitely more valuable than any thing that this world can furnish; "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away;" not indeed, the object of *sight*, but of the firmest *faith*, being *surely* "reserved in heaven for *us.*" [1 *Peter* i. 4.]

Christianity, therefore, prepares the mind for all circumstances, and all events, and is calculated to make us equally happy in all places, and at all times; giving us an equanimity, and consequently, a dignity of mind, and of character, which does the greatest honour to human nature, and makes it appear to the greatest advantage of which it is capable. Does any person then need to be ashamed of such a profession as this?

These great sentiments, which have such remarkable and happy effects, are not confined to a few persons, distinguished by superior genius; but are such as all human minds, even the weakest, are fully capable of. The doctrines of *a God*, of *a providence*, and of *a future life*, as far as they can have much influence on our tempers and conduct, are of equal comprehension to all men; and since the lowest of mankind are as capable of firm *faith* as the highest, they are capable of being as powerfully influenced by them. Accordingly, we find, in the history of Christianity, as much dignity of *sentiment* (if that be estimated by dignity of *conduct*, by benevolence to others, by patience in suffering, and by fortitude in danger and in death) in the lowest orders of mankind, as in the highest; and as much in the female, or weaker sex, as it is called, as in men. Whereas, the influence of the Heathen philosophy, whatever it was, was confined to the superior classes of men, who had leisure to study and attend to it. And yet in real life and use, it fell infinitely short of Christianity; so that the maxims of philosophy may be compared to a poor mineral, for which, however, men must dig deep; whereas the truths of Christianity are a rich treasure, found on the very surface.

Shall we then be ashamed of the gospel, which is so unspeakably more valuable than all the boasted *wisdom of the world;* which is calculated to make us happy in our present sentiments, feelings, and prospects, and infinitely more so in a future and a better state? Surely no man will think Christianity of less value, because the lowest of his fellow-creatures have equal access to the blessings of it with himself. He must be of a low and sordid mind indeed, who can be capable of such a sentiment. A great and generous mind will rejoice in the idea of that superior dignity and elevation of character which Christianity is capable of imparting to *all*. The sense of it will rather make him proud of the superiority of those common principles, which are capable of producing such great and happy effects, without requiring any thing extraordinary in the qualifications, or furniture

of mind, before the reception of them. Surely we ought not to be ashamed, but on the contrary, to make the greatest boast of that religion which can make, and which has made, the lowest peasants, and thousands of the lowest peasants and mechanics, act with more generosity in prosperity, and with more fortitude in adversity and persecution, than any philosopher in the Heathen world; making them superior to the pains and pleasures of life, from the prospect of a future state, on which their views were steadily fixed.

In this world too much account is made of the distinction between the *rich* and the *poor*. The former are courted, and the latter despised. But God, the common parent of all, makes no difference in his benevolent regards towards them. When the nature of the two states is considered, it will appear that there is no peculiar kindness in the Divine intentions with respect to either of them. They are only theatres for the exercise of different virtues. And, in reality, the trials of the rich are harder than those of the poor; as is evident from this circumstance, that more persons fall by the snares of prosperity than by those of adversity. And God, in particularly appointing that *the gospel should be preached to the poor*, (that they whose condition appears harder in this life, may have an opportunity of making a better provision for themselves in another,) gives the strongest proof of his paternal affection for them.

Whatever, then, be our situation in life, whether we be rich or poor, whether we rank among the more enlightened, or the more unlearned part of mankind; whether, on any of these accounts, we be of those whom others are disposed to look up to with respect, or to look down upon with contempt, let us equally value that gospel, the blessings of which regard us all alike, as the offspring of God, and brethren to each other; as training up together in a school of discipline here, and as joint heirs of immortality hereafter.

I shall conclude this discourse with two observations: First, if the world, or any part of it with which we may have intercourse, should hate or despise us because we are Christians, and act up to the strictest maxims of it, let us consider that men of the same description hated and despised our blessed Master. By the same great principles which actuated him, let us likewise *overcome the world*, and shew our superiority to our adversaries by the superiority of our sentiments and conduct; and especially by returning good for evil, requiting hatred with love, and by our behaviour, at least, endeavouring to inspire them with a respect

for those principles which enable us to feel, and to act, in a manner superior to what they are at present capable of.

Secondly. As our greatest privilege and happiness, and consequently our greatest cause of rejoicing and boasting, is that we are Christians, (that while other nations are still buried in gross darkness, in error and superstition, without the true knowledge of God, of his providence, and the certain belief of immortality, we have all been taught, and have from our earliest years been brought up in, the firm belief of these things,) let Christianity have something to boast of in us. The glory of any religion is the good conduct of those who profess it. Now the proper object of Christianity is to make good men and good citizens, proper subjects of God's moral government here, and fit heirs of immortality hereafter. And better were it, unspeakably better for us, never to have known Christianity, than to know it, and not live according to it; not to "let *our* light so shine before men," as that others "may see *our* good works, and *thereby* glorify *our* Father who is in heaven." [*Matt.* v. 16.]

Every Christian should be a preacher of the gospel. They who cannot recommend it by any other means, have it in their power to do it by a good example; and without this, any other method of recommending it will avail but little. Since, therefore, you retain the outward profession of Christianity, be Christians, my brethren, not *in name and profession only*, but also *in deed and in truth*. Be unto our great Lord and Master that "peculiar people, zealous of good works," which he came "to purify unto himself" [*Titus* ii. 14]; that when *he shall return, and take an account of his servants*, you, my hearers, and myself, "may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." [2 *Peter* iii. 14; 1 *John* ii. 28.]

GLORYING IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

GAL. vi. 14, 15:

God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

SUCH is the truly magnanimous declaration of the apostle *Paul*, on his speaking of some who urged the practice of cir-

cumcision, and a conformity to the law of Moses, on the Gentile converts, in order to gain favour with the unbelieving Jews, and by that means to avoid persecution. At the same time, he probably alluded to the common objection against Christianity, as the doctrine of a crucified malefactor.

With this circumstance attending their religion, Christians, in the early ages, were continually reproached; and in order to lessen the force of the objection, some of them had recourse to very improper expedients. In the age of the apostles arose the *Gnostics*, who said that Christ (or the Being who was properly entitled to that denomination) was *not* crucified, and, indeed, was not capable of it, or of dying in any mode; as he was a super-angelic spirit, which either quitted the man Jesus, to whom he had been attached, or had only assumed the appearance of a human body. They therefore said, that they were the disciples, not of a crucified man, or of any man, but of a superior Being, sent by God to rectify the disorders into which the world had fallen.

After the age of the apostles, the philosophizing Christians had recourse to a different scheme, in order to remove the ignominy of the cross. They supposed that the principle which rendered Jesus superior to other men, and by which he wrought his miracles, was the wisdom of the Supreme Being, detached in some unknown manner from his essence, and becoming a proper *person;* the second person in the Trinity, which was afterwards formed. This they said was that *logos*, or *word of God*, by which, as an instrument, he had made the world, had intercourse with the patriarchs, and which was afterwards employed to redeem the world, by becoming united to the man Jesus.

Of this scheme the apostles could have no knowledge; but of the former, which was sufficiently similar to it, they always spake with the greatest indignation. So far were they from being ashamed of a crucified Master, that they gloried in it. The apostle Paul, in my text, says, that it was his *only*, or his greatest boast: "God forbid that I should glory, *save* in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ;" adding, as a reason for his boasting, "by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature;" that is, by whose gospel I am released from my attachment unto sin; by which the world is so completely reformed, as, in a manner, to be created anew.

That we, my brethren, may enter fully into the sentiment of the apostle in this noble declaration, and adopt it ourselves, I shall endeavour to shew what was the design and operation of the death, and especially of so public and ignominious a death, of the Founder of our religion.

Many of the Heathens would, no doubt, have been much better reconciled to Christianity, if the author of it had appeared in such a character as that of *Socrates*, or of *Plato*, especially the latter, who lived in affluence, and with dignity, highly respected by the highest ranks of his countrymen, and by foreign princes, and whose death had nothing in it besides what is common to mortality; nothing that could attach an idea of *meanness* to the person who was subject to it. The Jews also would have thought better of Christianity, if the founder of this new religion, though he should not have been all that they expected from their *Messiah*, had resembled one of their ancient prophets, in whose death there was nothing *degrading;* and still more, if, like *Enoch* or *Elijah*, he had been taken up to heaven without dying. But in the meanness of our Saviour's appearance, and in the circumstances of his death, so humiliating to himself and his followers, the wisdom of God was particularly manifested, as will appear if we attentively consider them.

As that which distinguished Christ from all the other prophets, was his resurrection from the dead, which was a thing of so extraordinary a nature, that it required to be authenticated in the most unexceptionable manner, it was evidently necessary that, previous to his resurrection, his *death* should be unquestionable; and *this* it could not have been, if it had been private, or in the presence of his friends only. For, in this case, his enemies would not have failed to say, that he had never been dead; and no testimony of his disciples only, how unexceptionable soever in other respects, would have satisfied them of the fact. Consequently, the belief of it would have remained with a very few, and would have been incapable of spreading far.

To cut off all cavil of this kind, it was necessary that the death of Christ should be as public as possible, so that his enemies should never have it in their power to call it in question. And this they could have no pretence for doing, when he had been put into their own hands for the purpose. We may assure ourselves that the *death* of the person who had given them so much disturbance having been their great object, and having had their utmost wishes gratified in his *sentence*, they would take effectual care of the *execution* of

it, and would never have delivered the body to his friends, till they had been well satisfied that he was really dead.

Accordingly, we do not find, that it was ever supposed, by any of the ancient unbelievers, that Jesus was not certainly dead before he was put into the sepulchre. A suspicion of the contrary must have occurred at the time, if there had been any colour for it; so that it is too late to make the objection now. There were as inveterate, and as vigilant enemies of Christ at the time of his death, as there can be at this day; and they were in circumstances infinitely more favourable for discovering a fallacy of this kind. Since, therefore, they could not but acknowledge that Jesus was really dead, unbelievers of the present age must abide by their verdict, and content themselves with objecting to the credibility of the *resurrection;* which, for wise reasons, was not so public, though sufficiently authenticated.

With respect to this, I shall only observe, in this place, that as the enemies of Christ would never have been satisfied without being quite sure of his death, so it is utterly incredible that his disciples would have suffered and died in the cause of Christianity, if they had not been as well persuaded that he rose from the dead. It is not, indeed, possible to imagine, any case in which men should be more deeply interested to inform themselves of the truth of any fact; and it cannot be denied but that the immediate disciples of Christ, must themselves have been the best witnesses of it.

The certainty of the death of Christ being of use only with a view to the certainty of his resurrection, it is the latter only that is the proper foundation of the Christian's hope and joy. Accordingly, the apostles never fail to lay a proportionable stress upon it. Thus the apostle *Peter* says, (1 *Ep.* i. 3, 4,) "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope,"* (not *by the death*, but) "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in the heaven for you." And though great stress is justly laid on the death of Christ, as essential to the scheme of Christianity, and various methods are taken by the apostles to reconcile the minds of the Jews to the idea of it; yet more stress is always laid on the resurrection, whenever they are mentioned together. "Who is he that condemneth?" says the apostle *Paul. (Rom.* viii. 34.) "It is

* See Vol. XIV. p. 401.

Christ," (or rather, *is it Christ)** " that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God." And again, *Chap.* v. 10: " If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."† Let us, therefore, ever keep in view the subserviency of the death of Christ to his resurrection, and not imagine that it had any other proper object.

It was to his resurrection that our Lord himself chiefly directed the views of his disciples, and very seldom to his *death*, considered in itself. When the Pharisees demanded of him a sign from heaven, he told them, [*Matt.* xii. 40,] that, as *Jonah* lay *three days and three nights* in the belly of a fish, so the Son of Man should be *three days and three nights* (that is, so long and no longer) *in the heart of the earth;* evidently referring to his resurrection.‡ Again, he said, [*John* ii. 19,] " Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."§

Jesus appears to have had a distinct knowledge of the extensive propagation of his religion in the world, and of the necessity of his death to that end; but it was evidently with a view to a subsequent resurrection, without which, his death could not have answered any such purpose. Teaching in the Temple, a little before his death, he thus expresses himself, *John* xii. 23, 24: " The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified;" in which he must have had a view to his resurrection and ascension, preceded by his death. " Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a *grain* of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit;" that is, by its reproduction and multiplication. Again, *vers.* 31, 32: " Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world|| be cast out; and I, if I be lifted up from the earth," (that is, if I die,) " will draw all men unto me;" not by his death, but by his resurrection and ascension.

In all this we see that our Lord considered his death in no other light than as necessary to his exaltation and future glory, and especially to the successful propagation of his religion in the world. To this, therefore, let us direct our views; and when we glory in the *cross* of Christ, let us consider it as in reality a glorying in the *resurrection* of Christ, in which we could have no well-grounded faith, if there had not been, in the first place, a certainty of his death. And on the importance of the resurrection of Christ I need not

* See Vol. XIV. pp. 229, 230. † See *ibid.* p. 214.
‡ See Vol. XIII. pp. 116, 117. § See *ibid.* p. 279. || See *ibid.* p. 282.

insist. "If Christ be not risen," as the apostle *Paul* says, [1 *Cor.* xv. 14,] "then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." The whole of Christianity is an idle tale, unworthy of your attention.

Well, therefore, might the apostle glory in the cross of Christ; when, considered in all its connexions and consequences, it was the only foundation of his hope in a future life, the revelation of which was the distinguishing glory of the gospel, that gospel by which the world is reformed, and men are made fit heirs of a happy immortality. For such, no doubt, was his meaning, when he added, "by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world," that is, by whose gospel I am, as it were, become dead to this world, and alive to another and a better. While others looked with contempt on a crucified Jesus, and despised the gospel, on that account, the apostle saw the greatest wisdom in that very circumstance, as it contributed infinitely more to the great end of religion, than all the speculations and discourses of those philosophers who despised it.

Their instructions were only calculated for the use of a few persons of leisure and of a speculative turn; and to *them* they could hold out nothing that was capable of controuling the passions of men. They had no great and interesting truths to teach them, nothing of importance concerning God, or concerning many important branches of their duty here, and much less concerning their expectations hereafter. With respect to these things, so infinitely interesting to all men, the philosophers themselves were involved in great darkness. If they had any idea of the absurdity of the vulgar *Polytheism*, they saw nothing to induce them to *protest* against it, or to *risk* any thing for the overthrow of it. So far were they from this, that they universally conformed to it themselves, and recommended conformity in others, though the rites of their religion were always accompanied with the most detestable vices.

Whatever knowledge the philosophers might have of a First Cause, they had no belief in *a Providence*,* and were altogether destitute of a principle of practical and habitual *devotion*. Also, whatever speculations they might occasionally indulge concerning a state of existence after death, it was built upon the notion of their having existed before they were born, of which they could not have any proof; and it does not appear that they had so firm a faith in it, as to

* See Vol. II. pp. 81, 82.

be the foundation of any real *expectations*, such as in the least influenced their conduct in life.

On the other hand, the religion of a crucified Jesus, crucified in order to a well-attested resurrection, gave the most unlearned of mankind the firmest belief in a future life, and brought them acquainted with such principles of the unity and providence of God, of his respect to virtue here, and the rewards that he would bestow upon it hereafter, as effectually controuled their strongest passions and affections, gave them new and sublime objects of contemplation, new enjoyments and new pursuits. Teaching them to consider themselves as *children of God*, and heirs of immortal happiness, it raised them above the consideration of the pleasures or pains of this life; so that neither the hope of any emolument, nor the fear of any suffering here, was capable of diverting them from what they conceived to be their duty.

Thus were some of the lowest of mankind, who had no advantage besides the knowledge of Christianity, formed to characters infinitely superior to any that the Heathen world could boast. Having *a treasure in heaven*, treasures on earth were overlooked, and despised by them; and having a better life in prospect, they made little account of the present; but readily abandoned it, whenever their attachment to it, or any thing in it, would have been a snare to them, and would have led them to any compliances which they thought to be forbidden by the great Giver of life. Thus did the doctrine of a crucified Jesus, *crucify them to the world, and the world to them.* They were in reality, as the apostle expresses it, *new creatures, created anew* "in Christ Jesus," or by the gospel "unto good works." [*Ephes.* ii. 10.]

Considering that it was the *death* of Christ at which the world in general, both Jews and Gentiles, were so much offended, and which they continually objected to Christians; and that, in the idea of the apostles, this circumstance was of such absolute necessity in the scheme of the gospel, it is no wonder that, in answer to these objections, they should dwell so much as they do on their representations of the death of Christ; sometimes, for example, exhibiting it in the same light as the *sacrifices* under the law, sometimes as the killing of the *paschal lamb*, and sometimes as a *ransom* given by God for our redemption. All these views are different from, and inconsistent with, each other (which abundantly proves that none of them could be more than figurative representations) but, like our Saviour's comparison of it to a putting of *a grain of wheat* into the ground, they are all

calculated to take off the odium which, from this circumstance, was reflected upon Christianity. It is even no wonder that, considering the death of Christ in all its connexions, and especially with his resurrection and his apointment to great power and dignity, they should boast of it as if the whole of Christianity centred in it.

It is on a similar account that *faith in Christ* is often mentioned as the only condition of salvation, though faith alone, or the mere belief of the truth of Christianity, is so far from ensuring salvation, that it will aggravate the guilt, and enhance the condemnation, of any person who believes the gospel without obeying it. But in *faith*, as a condition of salvation, we are always to include the proper *consequences* of faith, namely, obeying the gospel, as well as believing the truth of it. However, as advantage has been taken of this concise manner of speaking, and *faith*, or mere *belief*, has been made by many to be the sole and proper condition of salvation, exclusive of *good works;* so we cannot wonder that the same persons should have represented the *death* of Christ, exclusive of every thing connected with it, especially his *resurrection* and future glory, as the sole procuring cause of men's redemption from sin and death.

Thus, my brethren, have the Scriptures been wrested and perverted. But an attention to the general tenor of the whole, will easily bring us to a right interpretation of any particular parts. And the same good sense and just discernment which teach us that *faith without works is dead*, and of no avail, will likewise inform us, that the death of Christ, considered without any regard to his resurrection, and what followed upon it, is of no consequence at all to the Christian scheme, but, on the contrary, would have been fatal to it. But taking both these together, with their natural connexions and dependencies, that is, connecting *works* with *faith*, and the consideration of the *resurrection* of Christ with that of his *death*, we justly make our boast of faith in Christ, and also of the doctrine of the cross; that is, we make our boast of *the gospel*, which, by means of the death and resurrection of Christ, brings life and immortality to light.

By this gospel we are, as it were, *created* and *born again* to a new and better life; not an uncertain mortal life like this, but to a permanent and immortal one; not a life like the present, in which our very subsistence is scanty and precarious, but to a great and ample *inheritance*, "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not

away;" not, indeed, the object of *sight* or of *sense*, but of *faith*, being *surely reserved in heaven for us.*" By this *new creation* and *new birth*, we become " heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus," who is styled our *elder brother*, and called [*Rev.* i. 5] " the first-begotten of the dead," being the first who, after death, was raised to that state of immortality which is destined for all his faithful followers.

I shall conclude this Discourse with a practical observation. If, with the apostle, we glory in the cross of Christ, or in that religion which could not have been confirmed without his death, let us not only be careful to govern our lives by the precepts of it in general, but more particularly be prepared to suffer whatever the strictest profession of it may call us to. Let us remember that our Saviour hath said, if any man will be his disciple, he must *take up his cross and follow him*, that is, he must be ready to do it, rather than abandon the profession of his gospel, or whatever the strictest purity of it may require. A true Christian is no more *of this world* than his Lord and Master was of it. With him every thing here below is but of secondary consideration. He must not only patiently and joyfully *bear the spoiling of his goods;* he must not only think it an honour to him to suffer *reproach* for the sake of Christ, but he must even not *account his life* itself *dear unto him*, if it would prevent his *finishing his course with joy.* But this we must remember for our consolation, that if, in time of persecution, *he that keepeth his life shall lose it, he that loseth his life* for the profession of the gospel, *shall keep it to life eternal. If we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with him, and be glorified together.* [*Matt.* x. 39; *Rom.* viii. 17.]

TAKING THE CROSS AND FOLLOWING CHRIST.

LUKE xiv. 27:

Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

WE shall not understand the full force of this language, or have a just idea of the manner in which it would be received by those to whom it was addressed, if we do not consider with what views most, if not all, of our Lord's disciples, the apostles themselves not excepted, crowded after him.

They expected that he would soon assume the character of their promised *Messiah*, who, they imagined, was to be a great temporal prince, destined to rescue the Jews from their subjection to the Romans, and to give them the empire of the whole world. So far, therefore, were any of them from expecting to be *losers* by their adhering to Christ, that they had no doubt of their being great and immediate *gainers*, of having the first places of honour, profit, and power in his kingdom, and not to *suffer*, but to *reign* with him.

What, then, must have been their astonishment, to hear our Lord, in his first discourse of any length, promise *the kingdom of heaven*, which they were looking for, to the *meek*, and the *persecuted for righteousness' sake;* to hear him speaking, on another occasion, of the danger of their being ashamed of him, and now saying that no person could be his disciple who did not take up his cross and follow him! Such, however, was the uniform language of our Lord through the whole of his ministry; and, backward as the apostles were to enter into these views whilst he was with them, they very readily did it after he was gone, when they found that *his kingdom was not of this world*, and yet were well assured that a kingdom was reserved for him, and for all his faithful followers, in another. Then they themselves adopted a language similar to this of their Master, and among others, *Paul* said, [2 *Tim.* iii. 14,] "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution."

This, you may say, was requisite in the circumstances in which the apostle wrote, Christianity being then in a state of persecution, which no person retaining the profession of it could avoid; but now that the church is at rest from persecution, those sufferings are no longer necessary, and we may be, at this day, as good Christians without any hardships, as in those days they who were exposed to them could be.

I am far from saying that this is not possible; but many persons, I fear, deceive themselves by this view of things, and imagine that much less is now necessary to make a Christian than really is so. Whereas, the terms on which we become Christians (and, of course, become entitled to the rewards of Christianity in a future world) are the very same that they ever were, and, upon the whole, perhaps not less difficult. As it greatly behoves us to form just ideas on this subject, I shall endeavour to give you some assist-

ance with respect to it; and for this purpose, I beg you will attend to the following observations.

In the first place, though the actual suffering of the loss of goods, of liberty, of life, or of reputation (which is often more valuable than life) be not always required of Christians, the temper of mind which would enable them to bear the loss of all these, if the sacrifice should be demanded, is always required of us. All Christians are required now, as much as in the times of the apostles, to cultivate a superiority of mind to this world, and all the enjoyments and pursuits of it. They are required to have their affections so set on heaven, and heavenly things; they are so to have their treasure and their citizenship in heaven, as that no earthly consideration shall be able to make them swerve from their duty. If any thing as dear to them as *a right hand*, or *a right eye*, would lead them to wrong conduct, they must *cut it off, and cast it from them*. They must not even *hold their lives dear unto them*, if it would prevent their *finishing their course*, or discharging the duty of a Christian, and that *with joy*, in every situation in which it shall please Divine Providence to place them. Our particular duties change with our circumstances, but the *principle* which leads to all duty, must ever be the same. This never changes; and where it really exists, it will not fail to make our duty, in all cases, eligible and joyful. A good man and a good Christian fears nothing but God, and hates nothing but sin.

Have we, then, my Christian brethren, this *principle of duty* within us? Have we that steady attachment to Christianity, and that firm faith in a future life, and the rewards which Christ has promised to his disciples there, that would enable us to bear persecution, and even death, rather than swerve from it? If we have, we are Christians, and shall undoubtedly receive the proper rewards of Christianity, whether we be actually called to suffer persecution and death, or not; as that soldier who keeps his rank, and holds himself ready to engage when called upon, is justly entitled to share the rewards of victory with those of his fellow-soldiers who happened to be called to the hottest action; because he would have engaged, and with as much alacrity, if it had been his place.

But, my brethren, (and it behoves us seriously to question ourselves on the subject,) if we be not ready and determined, when called upon, to bear persecution, and even unto

death, in the cause of Christ, we are no true Christians. If we be not prepared to *suffer* with Christ here, neither shall we *reign* and be *glorified* with him hereafter. If, in such a case, we would, in fact, *deny him*, *he also will deny us*. And though it does not now appear to the world, or may not even be known to ourselves, what our behaviour in time of persecution for conscience' sake would be, it is always known to God. He sees and judges by the heart, and whatever our final destination may be, we shall then be satisfied of the equity of his decision.

2. That I may not lead persons to think too unfavourably of their state of mind and general character, when, on putting the question to themselves, whether they should be able *to forsake all and follow Christ*, they might be apprehensive that they should not be able, but that they should shrink from torture and death, I would observe, that there is something in great emergencies which rouses the mind to uncommon exertion, so that, in the hour of actual trial, many have been able to bear what, in their cooler moments, they would have dreaded the thought of.

This receives abundant confirmation from the history of persecutions. Then many of the reputed *first* were the *last*, and the *last*, *first*. Many whom their fellow-christians looked up to, as those who would be the foremost to brave danger and death, have betrayed the greatest timidity, and have been the first to make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience; while others, who, in the eyes of their brethren, and in their own eyes, appeared as nothing, have stood foremost, and have borne the greatest and the most lingering tortures without a groan, calmly praying for their friends and their persecutors.

Let no person, therefore, conclude that because he shudders at the idea of pain, when he is thinking calmly on the subject in his closet, he should certainly deny Christ and abandon Christianity, if there should be no alternative but doing this, or dying, even in torture. We are all of us, in a great measure, strangers even to ourselves, and cannot tell with certainty how we should act in new situations.

Besides, when a persecution is seriously begun, (as you may perceive in the histories of such events,) a sense of honour, and dread of shame, come in aid of a principle of pure piety and conscience, and will not suffer persons to disgrace their profession, or be behind their fellow-christians in the glorious contest.

But what is more than all, and more to the purpose, is,

that a state of persecution leads persons to think much of their principles and their future expectations, which makes them strongly feel their importance. And the principles and prospects of Christianity are, in themselves, so great, and so far overbalance all the things of the present life, that they only require to be sufficiently *attended to*, to make any person do or bear any thing for their sake.

What hardships will not men undergo, and what risk, even of life, will they not run, in order to obtain a great estate, and much more a crown, in this world? In such a case as this, the mere pain of dying would not be regarded by them, if they were sure that they should not actually die, but that, after this suffering, they should certainly gain their purpose. This we see in history, and in common life, continually. There can be no doubt, therefore, but that if the same persons had the same firm faith in the future glorious rewards of Christianity that they have with respect to the things of this life, it would enable them to do and to suffer as much in order to obtain them.

It is only a deficiency of faith that makes persons shrink from persecution and death in the cause of Christianity. Because, in reality, all the pains of this transitory life are nothing in comparison of that *eternal weight of glory* which awaits those who have *faith and patience unto death*, with respect to another. This efficacious faith, which makes men superior to pain and death, is increased by that attention to the great principles of Christianity which a state of persecution almost enforces. There can be no doubt, therefore, but that if the Christian faith should be again tried as it was at the first promulgation of it, and as it was at the time of the Reformation, there would be as many martyrs as ever; but who they would be, it is not for us to say. The probability is, that they who suspect themselves the most, would be foremost on the glorious list.

I take this opportunity of recommending, especially to young persons, the reading of histories of persecutions. They are of excellent use to form and to fortify the mind; giving us the clearest idea of the real power of religious principles, infusing the same into ourselves, and thereby enabling us to act as becomes Christians in all circumstances. Let us not, however, expect to find perfection in men, not even in martyrs, any more than in the most exemplary characters in scripture history. There are no human examples that are patterns to us in all respects. In the strictest sense of the term, God only is good and holy.

3. A state of prosperity is, in reality, more dangerous than a state of adversity; so that if any person can act as becomes a Christian in the former, he may well presume that he would do so in the latter. If adversity has slain its thousands, prosperity has slain its ten thousands. The reason of this is obvious. A state of persecution brings our religious principles into view, and interests the mind in them; whereas, a state of rest makes us forget them: other influences then insensibly steal upon us; the pleasures or the business of the world engage our affections; they become our chief objects, and religion, which ought to be of primary, becomes of secondary consideration with us; and this is the same as if it was not attended to at all; for our Saviour has said, [*Matt.* x. 37,] "He that loveth father or mother," or any thing else, "more than me, is not worthy of me." He only is justly entitled to the honourable appellation of a *Christian* who postpones every thing else to it, and who sets no value upon any thing else when set in competition with it.

Whether this be our case, will appear by the share that Christianity has in our *thoughts*. Whatever it be that a man chiefly values, he oftenest thinks of; and if his attention be called off to other things, it will be detained no longer than is necessary. His favourite object, whatever it be, will perpetually recur to his mind, and it will not be in the power of any thing to exclude it long.

We may judge of this by the attention which men of the world give to riches in general, or to any particular estate they may wish to purchase, or by the attention which a person of a scientific turn of mind gives to his favourite objects, whether it be collecting what he thinks curious, or investigating what he thinks important; it will chiefly occupy his thoughts. Now a Christian may attend to these things, and many others, (for the occasions and business of life are various, and no one object, though the greatest, can possess the mind always,) but with him every thing of this kind, and the world itself, which contains them all, will be of no more than secondary consideration. They occupy and amuse him for a time, but he abandons them without regret when his more favourite business and pleasure call him. So much was the mind of pious David occupied with a sense of God, his providence, and religion in general, that he says the law of God was *his meditation day and night;* and he frequently mentions the pleasure he took in thinking of God in the night watches, whenever he could not

sleep. Till this be our case, we cannot be said to have attained a proper habitual devotion.

Now, such is the unavoidable influence of the world around us, that this state of mind is not to be attained without many efforts, or a course of discipline, in which the mind must be at first constrained to look off from the things of time to those of eternity. But repeated *acts* will at length beget any *habit*. And when, by this means, we shall come habitually to *set our affections on things above, where Christ is at the right hand of God*, our most pleasing meditations, the subjects to which our minds will naturally revert, when no other shall be particularly pressing for attention, will be those which relate to religion. Something concerning God, or concerning Christ and the gospel, will first present themselves, and be uppermost in our thoughts; and whenever they are diverted to other objects, (which is unavoidably the case in the usual business and commerce of the world,) they will recur with double strength and pleasure. It will be like the sight of a friend after a short absence.

Indeed, we make quicker advances in *the divine life*, as it may properly be called, by means of these intervals, in which the mind is occupied by the cares, or even the innocent pleasures, of life, than when we endeavour always to preserve a frame of direct devotion: for then, like the perpetual presence of the nearest friend, it would become dull and insipid. That generous, invigorating ardour, which is experienced by men of true piety, who mix with the world, and exert themselves to be useful in it, is unknown to the professed *devotee*, who abstracts himself from the world, in order, as he thinks, to give himself wholly to God. This frame of fervent devotion advances like the tide in the ocean, with intervals of recess between each flow. In this, I am confident, that I speak to the experience of all who cultivate a habit of devotion, and who attend to their own feelings.

This I observe, lest those persons who wish to cultivate this *habitual devotion*, which is the only proper test of their spiritual improvement, should be discouraged by that languor of mind, of which good men sometimes complain. It is only a call to the duties of life; after the cheerful discharge of which, their fervour of devotion will return with double warmth.

Unless, however, in time of prosperity, a man can attain to this state, in which religion, and the great objects of it, shall be his principal concern, he can have but little ground to conclude that he would, in time of persecution, *take up*

his cross, and follow Christ; and therefore, that he is one whom Christ will consider as his disciple, and of whom he will not be ashamed when he will come in his glory. But if a man can preserve a truly Christian temper in prosperity, if his heart be above the world, at the same time that he lives in it, he need not doubt but that he would approve himself a Christian in time of persecution. *As his day is, his strength will be.*

4. Notwithstanding this state of outward rest, and though no person is directly persecuted for being a Christian, yet the strict profession of Christianity is, in reality, at all times in a state of persecution. The world in general is but nominally Christian, and perhaps will never be wholly otherwise: for the great bulk of mankind, even in countries termed Christian, have other objects than Christianity, and, indeed, think very little about it. In consequence of this, a true Christian, one who values his religion as he ought to do, who feels as he ought to feel, and who acts as he ought to act, will be regarded with dislike. His conduct will be a reproach to that of others, and he will never be caressed like a man whose virtue is of a more pliable kind, and who can accommodate himself to the prevailing taste.

To a certain degree, the principles of honour, integrity, and benevolence, will always be admired, and make a man esteemed. But that kind of *honour*, and that kind of *generosity* which the world most admires, is very consistent with many things with which a true Christian cannot comply. The common hero of our stage is by no means a Christian character. And let a Christian behave in a manner the farthest from stiffness and moroseness, his sentiments are so elevated, compared with those of mere men of business or pleasure, that they cannot long accord together; and the latter being the more numerous, will be able to keep themselves in countenance, and will regard others with aversion and disgust. Now the man who is so much a Christian as to be unmoved by this contempt of the world, and who can bear to be ridiculed for his principles at present, would, I doubt not, be able to die for them.

But there are greater sacrifices than these which a Christian, in times of rest from outward persecution, must sometimes make to his integrity. The Christianity of the State, the Christianity of any state, neither is, nor ever was, the pure gospel of Christ. It is therefore a thing to which an enlightened Christian ought to give no countenance. It is his duty *to come out* of a corrupt church, and *to be separate*,

to touch none of her unclean things. If, for example, *a man*, or one whom you consider as a man, or even as the most exalted creature in the universe, has been made the object of *worship* to his fellow-creatures, such worship is impiety and idolatry. To join in such worship can bear no other construction. But how many do we find, of those whose minds are enlightened, and who in other respects act as becomes Christians, fail in this, if their interest, or their connexions only, lead them to compliance? Is not this trial, then, if we judge from its *effects*, (which alone shew its actual power,) greater than that of confiscation of goods, of imprisonment, or of death? Those who have been brought up in a dissent from such worship have no idea of a trial of this kind. They have had nothing to lose, and therefore they have nothing to boast of.

The influence of the world, pleasure, ambition, and emolument, being the same upon the human mind that it ever was, it must produce the same characters. Consequently, we must not be surprised, if there should be the very temper of the Scribes and Pharisees of our Saviour's time, in the rulers of Christian nations, and at the head of Christian establishments. On the other hand, as Christianity was by our Saviour compared to a net, which took in fishes of all kinds, good and bad, we may expect that, (as in that early age,) the profession of Christianity, and even in time of persecution, will not always purify the mind; but that there will be some unworthy characters in all Christian churches. At the same time, therefore, that we justly guard against others, let us look well to ourselves.

5. Though the proper rewards of Christianity will not be conferred but upon those whose Christian principles will enable them to act as becomes Christians on all occasions, in prosperity or adversity, in life or in death, we are not to infer that every man will *go to hell*, as we say, who is incapable of this. As there are degrees of virtue here, there will, no doubt, be proportional degrees of reward hereafter; though, speaking in a general way, we make only two classes of men, the *righteous* and the *wicked*, and say that the former will go to heaven, and the latter to hell. A man who only shrinks from a violent death in time of persecution, or who, even with his mind well-informed, conforms to a corrupt establishment in time of peace, is not to be ranked with the profligate and wicked. As to those who are truly conscientious in the most idolatrous worship, I pass no censure at all upon them. And there are many excellent men, who, like

Mr. Firmin * and others, are not convinced of the bad tendency of encouraging an idolatrous form of worship by their presence, though, one would think, that a very little reflection, and the observation of its actual consequences, might soon satisfy them with respect to it.

"The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," [*Rom.* i. 18,] but the merely timorous Christian is not of this class. He forfeits, no doubt, the proper rewards of Christianity, but not being, therefore, *a wicked man*, he cannot, in justice, be punished as one.

When the well-disposed youth in the gospel applied to our Saviour, desiring to know what he must do to inherit eternal life, and he appeared to have kept all the commands of God, Jesus "beholding him, loved him," [*Mark* x. 21,] though he could not bring himself to resolve to *sell all that he had, and give it to the poor*, in order to be *perfect*. It is true that he was not perfect; but he was not therefore a bad or wicked man, and in time he might come to be that great and exalted character which our Lord held out to him. *Perfect* means *full grown*, and this *fulness of stature* in the Christian character, we are all to aim at. But we must first be infants, then children, and afterwards young men, before we can be full grown. There are gradations in all nature, and in virtuous attainments as well as others; but we must not *despise the day of small things*, if we wish to see greater.

6. Lastly, I would observe that true virtue is always progressive. If we be contented with any attainments that we have already made, it is a proof that, in reality, we have made very few, or none. Let not us, my brethren, be satisfied with that degree of virtue which will exempt us from the punishment due to the notoriously wicked and profligate; but let us aspire to that *perfection of character* which will denominate us *Christians indeed*, and entitle us to *live and reign with Christ* when he comes to his proper kingdom. Let not the fear of man, of any thing that they can say of us, or do to us, be a snare to us; but, unmoved by censure, or the fear of suffering, let us uniformly follow the dictates of our consciences, adhere to the strictest precepts of Christianity, keep our hearts and affections above the world, and cultivate that heavenly-mindedness and entire devotedness to God, which distinguished our Lord himself;

* See Vol. V. p. 84; Vol. X. p. 360.

that we may hereafter partake of that *glory* which he will divide with all his faithful followers, when we shall be *one with him*, and also with *his God and Father*, as they are one; when, having *overcome the world*, we shall *sit down with him on his throne, as he has overcome, and is now set down with his Father on his throne.* [*Rev.* iii. 21.]

THE

Evidence of Christianity

FROM

THE PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS.

REV. xii. 11:

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death.

IN this emphatical language of prophecy, we have a view given us of the means by which Christianity prevailed in the world, notwithstanding all the opposition that was made to it.

The kingdom of Christ was to be erected on the ruins of the kingdom of Satan, that is, truth and virtue were to take place of error, superstition, and vice, though the latter were supported by all the powers of the world, and the former had no visible, no external support whatever.

In the prophecy of *Daniel*, [ii. 45,] the same thing was represented by a little, inconsiderable *stone, cut out of a mountain without hands*, which, falling upon a great image, or statue of gold, silver, copper, and iron, (a work of immense labour and expense,) broke it in pieces, and then of itself grew to be *a great mountain, filling the whole earth.**

The progress of Christianity is a most interesting object of speculation, and must appear truly wonderful, when it is considered that it prevailed by means the very reverse of what might have been expected, and which have been used to establish other systems of religion or philosophy, and the corruptions of Christianity itself. Other religions had either the aid of *power*, or at least, of the *learning* of the age and countries in which they were established. The founders

* See Vol. XII. p. 314.

of them were either conquerors, legislators, or men who were distinguished in life; so that, independently of the *doctrines* they promulgated, they appeared in a respectable light to the world.

On the contrary, the Founder of Christianity was an obscure person, a common mechanic, in a country, the inhabitants of which were despised by the rest of the world; without the advantage of any learned education, where the greatest account was made of that advantage, and where persons destitute of it were held in contempt. In this low and abject state he continued, till, at the age of thirty, he assumed the character of a public teacher. But, exciting the envy of the rulers of the country, he was apprehended and condemned to death, both by the highest court of judicature in the country, and also the sentence of the Roman governor, and he was executed as a common malefactor, viz. by *crucifixion*, a mode of execution more ignominious than any that is in use among us.

The first followers of Christ were, in general, of the same low rank in life with himself, wholly destitute of *power* or of *policy*. They were, all their lives, persecuted as he had been, and many of them died violent deaths. Such was, in general, the fate of the avowed professors of Christianity for near three centuries, in all which time this religion, notwithstanding, kept gaining ground, till it finally established itself on the ruins of the system which had every support that the power or policy of man, or a reverence for the most remote antiquity, could give it; a system on the rites of which it was imagined that the well-being of states absolutely depended, and which all the learning and philosophy of the age were employed to support. The rites of the popular religion were also as *captivating* as they were esteemed *sacred*, and gave the greatest countenance to that kind of *dissoluteness of manners* for which men are glad to find some pretence, and also to that *barbarity* to which they have always been too much prone.

What, then, were the means by which Christianity, thus extraordinarily circumstanced, did make its way in the world, till, in the natural course of things, the very powers which opposed it came to be on its side; learned writers, from being Heathen, becoming Christian, and, without any convulsion in the state, the Roman emperors themselves professing Christianity, and all the world being disposed to prefer the new religion to the old? They were, as we are informed in my text, the death of the Founder of Christi-

anity, and the testimony of his followers to his doctrine, miracles, and resurrection, sealed with their blood. It is of importance to consider how these operated to produce this great effect, and what instruction for our own conduct we may derive from the facts.

If we consider the nature of Christianity, and the object of it, we shall see that it could not be established by any other means than these, how ill adapted soever they may, on a superficial view of things, appear to answer the end.

What is Christianity, but that firm belief in a future life which produces the proper regulation of man's conduct in this? In order to give mankind the most satisfactory evidence of a future life, Christ was commissioned to teach that doctrine as from God, to confirm it by miracles, and, what was more, to exemplify it by himself dying, and rising from the dead. In the nature of things, nothing more could be done to give mankind the most absolute assurance of a fact in which they were so much interested.

Any attempt to gain belief to this or any doctrine, by *power*, would have been unavailing and absurd. Men may be compelled to *act* as they are directed, because all the motions of their bodies are subject to their wills, and power may supply motives to operate on the will. While men are under constraint, they may find an interest in such compliances as nothing but constraint could enforce: but a man's *faith* is not in his own power; he may *do* what he pleases, if he have the natural power of doing it; but he cannot *believe* as he pleases, nor without sufficient evidence. Thus, though a man may be compelled to say that *two and two make five*, or that England is a peninsula contiguous to France, he cannot really *think* so, let him endeavour it ever so much.

It is evident, therefore, that nothing could make mankind *believe* that Christ wrought miracles, that he died, and rose from the dead, and, therefore, that there is a future life, to which themselves will be raised, but the proper *evidence* of the truth of those facts. And in distant ages, in which persons can have no opportunity of inquiring into the truth of the facts for themselves, the only evidence to them is the full conviction that they who *had* that opportunity did believe them. This is the only foundation of faith in all ancient history. We ourselves are, as it were, but *of yesterday*, and can know but little of past transactions. But men, exactly like ourselves, have lived in all ages. Their eyes, ears, and natural judgments of things were the same that

ours are; and as we think it reasonable to expect that posterity should receive our testimony with respect to things of which we are witnesses, we cannot refuse our assent to any thing of which we have the sufficient testimony of those who have gone before us. A regard to truth is equally common to all ages; and there is no motive to falsify that is not the same at all times. We therefore know at this day how to guard against imposition with respect to past transactions, just as well as with respect to recent and present ones.

That Christ, his apostles, and immediate followers, were themselves fully persuaded of the truths which they taught, their conduct abundantly proves. Would Christ have submitted to be put to death, and especially to so cruel and ignominious a death, if he had not had the fullest persuasion that God would raise him from the dead? Would the apostles and first disciples have asserted that he did die, and rise again, and have persisted in giving this testimony through life, notwithstanding all the hardships and persecution they endured in consequence of it, if they had not been fully persuaded that the facts were true, and also of the greatest importance?

But I mean to enlarge more particularly on the evidence of Christianity from the sufferings of the professors of it in the early ages. The world and the powers of darkness were overcome *by the blood of the Lamb*, by *the testimony of the apostles*, and especially by their *not loving their lives unto the death*, or their not scrupling to die rather than renounce their faith. How *the death of Christ* operated to the great end of establishing his gospel, I have largely illustrated in a preceding discourse. I shall therefore now content myself with explaining the evidence that Christianity derives from the persecution and martyrdom of his followers, and shewing the impropriety of attempting to promote his religion by any means besides *persuasion*, and *patient suffering* as an instrument of persuasion.

I have already observed, that the only evidence we now can have of the reality of those facts on which the truth of Christianity depends, is the firm belief of them by those who had the best opportunity of informing themselves concerning them, in the age in which they were transacted. That conduct of theirs, therefore, which shall appear to be best adapted to express their firm persuasion, is the most favourable to this evidence. Now we cannot imagine in what manner any person can express his firm persuasion of

the *truth* or the *value* of any set of principles, more strongly than by his suffering and dying for them. The comforts of life, and especially life itself, are dear to every man, as we may judge from our own feelings. No man, therefore, will sacrifice them without a firm persuasion of his receiving a full equivalent for their loss. This full equivalent for every thing in this world, the Christian believes that he has in a world to come. And it is the express declaration of Christ, that the happiness intended for his followers in a future world, cannot be secured without abandoning every thing in this life, and life itself, if they cannot be retained in consistency with the profession of his religion. And we find that they even joyfully bore the *loss of all things*, and did not even *hold their lives dear unto them*, whenever their profession of Christianity demanded the sacrifice.

Whence, then, could arise that full assurance of faith which this conduct manifests, but from the evidence of their own senses, that what they related of Christ, and especially concerning his resurrection, was true? On his death, all his disciples, and the apostles among the rest, forsook him and fled. What, then, could have given them courage to re-assemble, and to preach boldly in his name, in the face of danger and of death, but the certain knowledge that he was risen from the dead, of which themselves, and themselves only, were the proper witnesses? The testimony of strangers would never have satisfied them. They did not even give credit to one another, but, naturally enough, insisted on the most satisfactory *personal evidence* of a fact in which they were so much interested. Since, therefore, they did all assert that they *had* received this personal evidence of the resurrection of Christ, (and their account of it is so circumstantial, and so natural in all respects, as to give us no suspicion of a fallacy,) we have all the evidence of the truth of this remarkable fact that it is possible for us, at this distance of time, to have.

Still, however, there would have been room to doubt, if they had not *persisted* in their testimony, and if they had not also had both sufficient *opportunity* and sufficient *motives* to consider and reconsider the thing. Now the witnesses were numerous, and, living together, they must have had frequent opportunities of conversing with one another on the subject, and of comparing their observations. And surely no *motive* could be wanting, when all the happiness of their lives, and even life itself, was depending. If they had been suffered to live unmolested, they would have

derived no advantage from maintaining an imposture; but still it might have been said that they had no great inducement to divulge the secret; and that, in different circumstances, the truth might have been *extorted* from them. They were not *put to the question*, as it is called.

How satisfactory, then, is the evidence of the truth of Christianity from the testimony of almost all its proper witnesses, as *sealed with their blood*, and therefore not given without the most deliberate consideration, and in opposition to the strongest inducements to declare the reverse of what they did! No circumstances, therefore, can be imagined in which testimony shall be more credible. It was the testimony of men unquestionably the best informed concerning the facts, and who could have no motive to impose upon the world with respect to them, if it had been in their power, because they evidently had nothing to gain by it, but, on the contrary, were unspeakable losers. Their prospect of reward was not in *this*, but in *another* world. And no interest can be imagined to have enlisted them into the service of a dead impostor.

How much more convincing is this kind of evidence than that of men who draw their swords in defence of any cause! The man who *fights*, hopes to get the victory, and most probably expects to secure to himself some temporal advantage. This, therefore, may well be supposed to have been his object from the first; and with such motives as these, what frauds, as well as villainies of all kinds, will not men attempt? It cannot, by any means, therefore, be inferred that a man may not fight for a falsehood, provided it promises to be a gainful one.

This circumstance renders the testimony of the followers of *Mahomet* so justly suspicious. As he led them not to *martyrdom*, but to *battle*, they might hope to be gainers by their attachment to him, though they had known him to be an impostor; and might then contribute to impose upon others. His success in war might, however, in time, give even *them* an idea that his designs were countenanced by God. In this state of things, many insignificant circumstances would be interpreted into divine attestations: but does it at all follow that the men who fought with *Mahomet* would have submitted to a voluntary and painful death, rather than relinquish their faith in his divine mission? This is highly improbable, especially as he exhibited nothing that could be called a *miracle*, or any proper token of God being with him.

We see, then, the infinite superiority of the pretensions of Christ to those of Mahomet, or of any who have endeavoured to establish a religion by *violence*. Our Lord, confiding in the power of *truth*, disclaimed all other aid, and therefore ordered his disciples not to *fight*, but to *die*, trusting that the deaths of some would be such an evidence of their firm persuasion of the truth for which they suffered, and of the infinite importance of it, that though those disciples would be lost to the world, the loss would be abundantly made up by others, who would be gained by their means. And so many converts were, in fact, gained by this means, as to give rise to the saying, *the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church*.

So much confidence had our Saviour in this natural method of propagating his religion, founded on *truth*, that he strictly forbade any other; and on one occasion he seems to have foretold that if ever his disciples should have recourse to violence, it would be fatal to themselves. When *Peter*, in order to defend his Master, *drew his sword, and smote a servant of the high-priest*, he bade him *put up his sword into the scabbard*, saying, *They that take the sword, shall perish with the sword*.* Whether this was delivered with a prophetic spirit or not, it is remarkable, that when bodies of Christians have attempted even to defend themselves by arms, they have generally been overpowered, and have suffered more in consequence of it, than they probably would have done by yielding to the storm. The friends of reformation in *France*, in *Hungary*, and in *Germany*, who opposed force to force, were always defeated, and the progress of the Reformation was evidently retarded in consequence of it.

I would farther observe, that violence in support of truth is utterly contrary to the nature and genius of the Christian religion, as it supposes a temper of mind inconsistent with it, viz. hatred and revenge. It may be pretended that religious wars and persecutions are undertaken with no other view than to correct and reform, or to punish some as a warning to others; and I do not say that this is absolutely impossible, or that there never have been pious and well-meaning persecutors: but the great probability is, that this has been nothing more than a pretence for having recourse to violent methods. In general, it is but too apprent that they who have engaged in those scenes of blood, have been actuated by a spirit of greater rancour than those who have

* See *Matt.* xxvi. 52, *John* xviii. 10, 11, Vol. XIII. p. 340.

engaged in civil contests. We cannot conceive any thing more diabolical, as we may say, than the spirit with which the persecution of the Protestants was always carried on by the Papists. How, then, can it be right to propagate Christianity in a way in which the Christian spirit and character must be abandoned?

Not only should we forbear all violence in the propagation of Christianity itself, but in enforcing any particular doctrine of it. What Christianity in general disclaims, ought not to be admitted in any thing belonging to it. And not only should we avoid all actual violence, but every thing that approaches to it, as anger and abuse. If calm reasoning fail, *those* are not likely to succeed. It is the free and cheerful assent of the understanding that is to be gained, and to this, anger and reproach are not at all calculated to contribute. A degree of *earnestness*, suited to the subject, is proper to shew our own conviction of the truth and importance of our principles; but every thing beyond this, Christianity strictly forbids. At every thing that savours of *force*, the mind of man revolts, and hardens itself. It is felt as an insult and a provocation, and will be resented; in consequence, ourselves and our opinions will appear in an odious light.

As we must not make use of violence or abuse ourselves, so we should take it patiently when it is offered by others. It is generally a proof that our adversaries have nothing better to offer, and therefore is a presumption that we have *truth* on our side; and surely the sense of *this* may well enable us to bear up under any insult to which we may be exposed. The apostles rejoiced that they were *counted worthy to suffer shame* in the cause of Christ; and so shall we, if we have their temper, and the same firm persuasion that the cause in which we engage is a good one, and, consequently, that *in proper time* it will *appear* to be so; when all the insult and reproach that have been thrown upon us will recoil upon those who had recourse to them.

A state of persecution has been the lot of truly good men, and especially of all great and distinguished characters, whose aim has been to reform abuses, and introduce new light into the minds of men in all ages. It was, therefore, with reason that our Saviour said to his disciples, *Luke* vi. 26, "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you, for so did *the Jews* of the false prophets." If the world love us, it is a proof that we love the world, and conform to it, that is, to the follies and vices of it. Whenever, therefore,

we find ourselves in this situation, we ought to suspect ourselves, and aim at higher degrees of purity and excellence, aspiring to that truly dignified conduct which the bulk of mankind, not being equal to, will view with dislike, as reproaching themselves, though, on some occasions, they cannot fail to admire it.

To distinguish ourselves from the world, we have no occasion to affect any peculiar austerity of manner, and much less seclude ourselves from the world. We must live in it, and make it our study to improve it. We are to have our *conversation*, or *citizenship in heaven*,* and live as those who are *strangers and pilgrims here*. But while we reside in the world, though not as *citizens* of it, or properly *belonging to it*, we must do the duties of it, live as social beings, and discharge, in the most exemplary manner, whatever is incumbent upon us in the various relations of life, doing good against evil, and *overcoming evil with good*.

Thus will our "light shine *before men*," not in a cloister; and others *seeing our good works, will glorify our Father who is in heaven*. We shall walk *worthy of God to all well-pleasing, being perfect in every good word and work to do his will;* and having done the proper duty of this life, having *fought the good fight of faith*, and having *finished our Christian course with joy*, with joy even in the midst of tribulation, *an abundant entrance will be administered unto us into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Having suffered with him, we shall also reign with him, and be glorified together.*

* See *Phil.* iii. 20, 21, Vol. XIV. p. 319.

DISCOURSES

ON THE

Evidence of Revealed Religion.

That thou mightest know the certainty of these things wherein thou hast been instructed. Acts i. 4.

[*London*, 1794.]

TO

The Rev. THOMAS BELSHAM,

*Tutor in Divinity in the New College, Hackney.**

Dear Sir,

Affection and esteem join with a sense of propriety in leading me to dedicate this work to you. To your friendship and society I owe a very great part of the satisfaction I have enjoyed during my residence at Clapton; not many days having ever intervened without our having had some intercourse, since I have been settled in your neighbourhood; and the interruption of it, as the breaking of any other habit, will for a long time be sensibly and painfully felt by me. It has also been an intercourse as improving as it has been pleasing to me. And without the seasonable aid of impressions from the knowledge and virtue of others, no man can tell how much his own mind might have suffered; man being the great instrument in the hand of Providence, of forming men for the best or the worst purposes.

But what, I hope, attaches me to you more than any thing of this nature, are the important services you are daily rendering to the great cause which we have both at heart, viz. the training up of youth in the principles of liberal and useful knowledge, and especially of rational Christianity and virtue. The immediate object of these *Discourses* is one to which you have long given the greatest attention. No person educated under you, can be ignorant either of what Christianity really is, or of the rational evidence on which its truth is founded; and the effect of your judicious labours is very conspicuous.

I have no where known, or heard of, such studious and orderly young men as those of the New College at Hackney, and to this, your immediate inspection, as the resident tutor, and your judicious treatment, have eminently contributed. Nor have the rational Dissenters ever had ministers who, by their ability and zeal, promise to distinguish themselves more

* See Mr. Belsham's *Memoirs of Lindsey*, pp. 293, 294.

by their labours for the good of mankind, than those who have been trained by you. To them, as I am going off the stage, I shall principally look for that rechristianizing of the world, which is now become absolutely necessary, if Christianity is to subsist at all.

The wretched forms under which Christianity has long been generally exhibited, and its degrading alliance with, or rather its subjection to, a power wholly heterogeneous to it, and which has employed it for the most unworthy purposes, has made it appear contemptible and odious in the eyes of all sensible men, who are now every where casting off the very profession, and every badge, of it. Enlightened Christians must, themselves, in some measure, join with unbelievers, in exposing whatever will not bear examination in or about religion. But when it shall, by this means, be divested of all its foreign incumbrances, it will be found to be something on which neither their arguments nor their ridicule will have any effect. It is a farther satisfaction to me to reflect, that you and I not only agree in entertaining the same views of this subject, but that from a similar unfavourable outset, we have both gradually, and by similar means, been led to entertain them.

I think myself peculiarly happy in leaving my congregation, and especially my classes of young persons, under your care, as I know no person whose views in these respects coincide so exactly with my own. As far as they have been satisfied with me, I am confident they will be with you; and candour and good-will in the hearers is a sure earnest of their improvement under any teacher. Happy shall I think myself, if, in any future destination, I can find, or form, a sphere of exertion of a similar kind; that I may be in America, what I shall leave you here; that we may communicate our respective plans for the improvement of ourselves, and the instruction of others, in whatever is most interesting to man; and that, by the discipline and experience that we acquire here, we may be prepared for a sphere of superior usefulness, and what will surely accompany it, superior happiness, in a better state.

With the greatest affection and esteem, I am,

Dear Sir,

Yours sincerely,

J. PRIESTLEY.

Clapton, March, 1794.

PREFACE.

THE subject of these Discourses is one on which I have addressed the public several times before, as in my *Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion*,* several parts of my *History of the Christian Church*, my *Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever*,† those to *the Philosophers and Politicians of France*, and those *to the Jews;* besides the first part of the *Conclusion* of my *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, addressed to Mr. Gibbon,‡ my *Discourse on the Resurrection of Jesus*, and the large *Preface* to my Philosophical Works, in three volumes. But the subject being of the greatest importance, and especially at this time, I have thought it not superfluous to compose and publish these *Discourses*, intended more particularly to illustrate the evidence arising from the *miracles* that have been wrought in favour of the divine mission of Moses and of Christ; so that, though my object be ultimately the same, the ground that I have taken is considerably different from any that I have been upon before.

The late revolution in France, attended with the complete overthrow of the civil establishment of Christianity, and the avowed rejection of all revealed religion, by many persons of the first character in that country,§ and by great numbers also in this, calls the attention of persons of reflection in a very forcible manner to the subject. It now more than ever behoves all the friends of religion to shew that they are not chargeable with a blind, *implicit faith*, believing what their fathers, mothers, or nurses, believed before them, merely because they believed it; but that their faith is the offspring of reason: that Christianity is no *cunningly devised fable*, but that the evidence of the facts on which it is built, is the same with that of any other facts of ancient date; so that we must abandon all faith in history, and all human testimony, before we can disbelieve them.

The great problem to be solved is, how to account for present appearances, and such facts in ancient history as no person ever did, or can deny, viz. the actual existence of

* *Part* II. See Vol. II. pp. 72—230. † *Part* II. See Vol. IV. pp. 453—548.
‡ See Vol. V. pp. 480—494. § See Vol. X. p. 471.

Christianity, and the state of it in the age immediately following that of Christ and the apostles. Unbelievers must think that they can account for the facts without admitting the truth of the gospel history. On the other hand, the Christian says that, if this history be not admitted, the well-known state of things in the age immediately succeeding, must imply more miracles, and those without any rational object, than that history supposes. The like, he says, must be the case with respect to the history of the Jews in the *Old Testament*. If the *Mosaic* history be admitted, that of the Jews in that age, and from that time to the present, is natural; but on any other supposition most unaccountable; that whole nation thinking and acting as no human beings ever did, or possibly could, think and act. Whereas, it must be taken for granted, that the Jews are, and ever have been, *men*, as well as ourselves. This is the state of the argument between believers and unbelievers in revelation, that I have frequently held out, and no person can say that it is an unfair one. Least of all, it is such as a man who wishes to be governed by *reason*, and who would account for all appearances, in the most natural manner, can object to.

The present times are, no doubt, exceedingly critical with respect to Christianity; and being fully persuaded of its truth, I rejoice that they are so. Whatever will not bear the test of the most rigorous scrutiny, must now be rejected; the great supports of superstition and imposture, viz. human authority, power and emolument, being now, in a great measure, withdrawn. This will be the means of purging our religion from every thing that will not bear this rigorous examination; but it will contribute to the firmer establishment of every thing that *will* bear it. And what can we wish for more? It ought not to be any man's interest to maintain an error, and to take an idle tale for undoubted fact. But if revealed religion be true, if Moses was commissioned to teach the unity of God, and the purity of his worship; and if Jesus Christ was commissioned to confirm the same, and to announce to mankind the still more interesting doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and a future state of righteous retribution, it is of infinite consequence that all men should be apprized of it; since their conduct here, and their expectations hereafter, are nearly concerned in it. Compared with truths so momentous as these, all other knowledge is a trifle.

It is no small satisfaction to Christians, that even the pre-

sent prevalence of infidelity, as well as the universal spread, and final establishment, of Christianity, were foretold by Christ. And as he spake of this infidelity as one of the signs of his approaching coming, we may be looking forward with confidence and joy to that glorious event; after which, the belief of Christianity, together with the reign of virtue and of peace, will be universal. This will be that *kingdom of God*, or *of heaven*, which is the consummation to which we should be devoutly looking, and which, by our Saviour's direction, is the subject of our daily prayers, when *nation shall no more lift up sword against nation, and when they shall learn war no more.* For an account of other signs of the approach of this great catastrophe, I refer to my *Fast Sermon* of this year. The present times are uncommonly eventful. I expect that they will be exceedingly calamitous; but, that the final issue will be most glorious.

As my *Discourse on the Resurrection of Jesus*, and also that which exhibits *A View of Revealed Religion*, preached at the ordination of Mr. Field,* when Mr. Belsham gave the charge, printed along with it, fall within the plan of these Discourses, (the latter making a proper conclusion to them,) I have made them part of this course; and as I shall no more publish them separately, and wish to preserve the *Prefaces*, and the *Address to the Jews* prefixed to the former, I shall give them in an *Appendix*.†

Also, at the request of some friends, for whose advice I have the greatest deference, I subjoin a copy of my *Correspondence with Mr. Gibbon*,‡ occasioned by my presenting him with a copy of my *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*. It will appear that I always thought myself at liberty to do this. But he being now dead, and there being no person who can be offended at it, every shadow of objection to the publication is removed.

I considered Mr. Gibbon as better qualified to discuss the evidences of Christianity than any other unbeliever in this country, and probably in any other; and his plan of attack being on the ground of *history* and *human nature*, was the fairest of any; so that the discussion to which it would have led, seemed well calculated to overturn the scheme if it was not well-founded, or to establish it if it was. I therefore regret that he did not comply with my invitation, to

* "Of Warwick, July 12, 1790."

† These articles are now reserved, to appear among the Author's smaller pieces, in a subsequent volume.

‡ This *Correspondence* also, is reserved for another volume.

which his writings gave the fairest occasion. The interest of important truth would, no doubt, have been promoted by it. As to Mr. Gibbon's motives for declining the discussion (which on my part would have been very dispassionate) and the temper with which the letters are written, every person will form his own judgment.

In the *Preface* to my *Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever*, in which I replied to Mr. Hume's *Posthumous Dialogues*, I gave Dr. Adam Smith, with whom I had some acquaintance,* a hint that I had no objection to discuss with him the Atheistical principles of his deceased friend.† But he took no notice of it.‡ No friend of religion, I trust, will ever decline the defence of his principles, but, as the apostle *Peter* [1 *Ep.* iii. 15] exhorts, be *always ready to give a reason for the hope that is in him.* And in the present state of things it is of particular importance that young persons be carefully instructed in the grounds and principles of their religion, that they may be qualified both to give a good account of them, for themselves, and be able to instruct others.

* Dr. Adam Smith was also an acquaintance of the pious and learned *Newcome Cappe*, who, in 1787, "the last time they ever met," endeavoured to engage his attention to "the interesting subject of revelation." See Mr. Cappe's *Critical Remarks*, 1802, *Preface* "by the editor, Catherine Cappe," p. xiii.

† See Vol. IV. p. 325, *ad fin.*

‡ Though he survived the first appearance of that *Preface* ten years, dying in 1790.

DISCOURSE I.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION TO ENLARGE THE MIND OF MAN.

1 John iii. 3:

Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

It is acknowledged that man is superior to brute creatures, and that this superiority consists in his capacity of being much happier in himself, and in his power of contributing in a more eminent degree to the happiness of others; by which means he makes nearer approaches to his Maker, who is supremely benevolent, and superlatively happy.

It is also well known, that this superiority in man, with respect to his power of enjoying and communicating happiness, depends upon the superiority of his mental faculties, by which he is capable of greater comprehension of mind, of taking into his view more of the past and of the future, along with the present; so that his ideas are more complex, and farther removed from mere sensible objects. In consequence of this, the happiness of man does not depend upon his present sensations, but is of a more stable nature; and his resolutions and actions do not depend upon variable circumstances, but he can pursue an uniform plan of conduct, without being diverted from it by the events of the hour, or of the day.

This superior comprehension of mind cannot, however, in the nature of things, be attained by man without a state of progressive improvement, beginning with the condition of a brute animal, merely impressed by sensible objects, and impelled to action by those impressions, as children are; because these impressions are the elements of all our knowledge, and of all our powers in future life; and there is no true wisdom in any attempts to accelerate this progress beyond a certain term. For what would a greater comprehension of mind, and a greater power of combining ideas, avail us, without a stock of ideas to combine and comprehend? It is well known, that if we expect that boys should ever make valuable men, they must continue some time in the state of boys,

or they will never make men worth forming. In the very warmth and impetuosity, and, consequently, the occasional irregularities of youth, we often perceive the germ of the most excellent characters. But then, these irregularities of youth, by which their minds are stored with a sufficient variety of strong impressions, must not be continued beyond the season of youth, or that state of peculiar sensibility, in which something still more new shall be able, in a great measure, to lessen the effect of preceding impressions; otherwise habits will be formed which will preclude all farther progress. In a course of time the mind acquires an insensibility to new impressions. A man is then, in a manner, incapable of extending his views, and thereby he loses the great privilege of his rational nature. His mind, for want of an accession of new ideas, or farther knowledge, may even contract, and he may sink into a state approaching that of a brute animal, and one that is old and intractable.

This, however, I observe by the way, though I shall have some farther use for the observation hereafter; my object being to shew, that for the very same reason that a man excels other animals, a believer in divine revelation, and especially a Christian, is superior to other men; his comprehension of mind being enlarged by such knowledge as revelation brings him acquainted with, so that he is capable of being much more happy in himself, and of a more generous ardour in promoting the happiness of others. Also, being less sensible to present impressions, he will be more drawn out of himself, and be more free from that anxiety and distress, to which persons who attend to themselves only, are necessarily subject.

It may not be improper to consider the first great article of revealed religion, (because it is by this means more strongly impressed upon the mind, though it is also the dictate of nature,) to be the doctrine of the being of a God. It so much stands or falls with the belief of revelation, that at present they generally go together, and they who are unbelievers in revealed religion, though they may retain the belief of a God, have little motive to *attend* to the subject, so that they are generally practical, though not absolutely, speculative Atheists.

Now the belief, the habitual and practical belief, of the being of a God, a Being infinitely wise, powerful, and good, the author of universal nature, and the doctrine of a Providence, which is connected with it, contributes greatly to the enlargement of the mind of man, extending our views

beyond what we immediately see and hear around us. Without this, man is comparatively a being of narrow views, but little advanced beyond the brutes, and has but little motive to attend to any thing beyond himself, and the lowest gratifications. Without this faith he must be liable to be disturbed and unhinged by every cross event.

But the belief of a God, and of a Providence, of a Being who created all things, who has assigned to every creature his proper station, and who superintends the whole chain of events, relieves and enlarges the mind, and also gives us a lively interest in the concerns of others. The idea of a God is that of the Father of all his creatures, and especially of all mankind; and this suggests the farther idea, that all men are brethren, the children of one common parent; and with this idea are intimately connected a thousand other pleasing ideas, and especially a sense of a common interest, and an obligation to promote it by every means in our power. With this favourable impression, we are prepared to respect and to love all mankind as brethren, and to bear with one another as such. Whereas, without this idea, we feel as so many unconnected individuals turned adrift upon the wide world, where we must each of us scramble for ourselves as well as we can, and shall seldom think of attending to others, any farther than a regard to our own interest may make it expedient.

Thus, by means of faith in the being and providence of God, we are nobly carried out of, and beyond, ourselves, and are led to conceive a generous regard for others; and by this we lose nothing but a mean selfishness, and with it a tormenting anxiety, which is at the same time the characteristic, and the punishment, of a narrow, contracted mind.

There is no true, well-founded patriotism that has any other foundation than this. Without this there will always be room for suspicion and distrust, a suspicion of private and selfish views, suited to a mind destitute of this great and enlarged principle, of all mankind constituting one family, under one great head; the idea of an Universal Parent, who regards us all as his children, and who requires that we regard each other in the same pleasing light.

Without faith in God, and a belief of his universal, benevolent providence, men must be liable to be peculiarly distressed and disconcerted at such calamitous events as we are daily subject to. They are evils in themselves, and we do not know to what farther evils they may lead. Even the good that we see, is uncertain, and unstable, and for any

thing that we know, may terminate in evil, which it will thereby only serve to aggravate. In this state of mind, all is darkness and confusion, anxiety and dread.

But the moment that we begin to consider the world not as a fatherless world, but that there is a principle of wisdom and goodness presiding over all, and believe that nothing can come to pass without the knowledge and intention of this Infinite Wisdom and Goodness, the gloom vanishes, and day-light bursts upon us. For though we be still at a loss to account for particular events, and do not distinctly see their tendency to good, our firm persuasion that good *is* intended, and will be the result of the whole scheme, is not at all shaken; and then, nothing will remain but a pleasing curiosity with respect to the manner in which the good will be produced. In the midst of calamity we can, with this persuasion, live a life of faith and of joy. With the devout Psalmist, we can say, "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice." For though "clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the *foundation* of his throne." [*Psalm* xcvii. 1, 2.]

Thus does the belief of a God and a providence contribute to make a man a much greater and happier being than he otherwise could be. It enlarges his view of the system of nature, of which he is a part. It discovers to him his connexion with, and his interest in, other beings, and other things. It leads him to look backward to the origin of things, and forward to the termination of the great drama, and to believe that it will be most glorious and happy.

This end will be much farther promoted by the great doctrine of revelation, that this life is not the whole of our existence, that it is only a state of probation and discipline, calculated to train us up for a future and more glorious state after death. How different and how superior a being must this view, properly impressed upon the mind, make a man! It is a difference not easy to describe, but it may be felt. A being of a day will have his views, thoughts, and schemes, adapted to a day. To-morrow cannot interest him, because he has no interest in it. If he like the scenes of the day, to which his existence is confined, his heart must sicken at the idea of any thing beyond it, because he is totally excluded from it.

What then must be the feelings of the man who truly and habitually believes that he is born for eternity; that years and ages bear no sensible proportion to the term of his existence; that the duration of the sun, moon, and stars, is no

more than a period that divides his existence, and assists him in measuring it; that when they shall be no more, he only, as it were, begins to be, and that other suns and other worlds will be equally short-lived with respect to him! How sublime and how animating is the thought! Can any thing mean and sordid occupy the breast of a being who is persuaded of this grand destination? Will he not overlook every thing temporary, and be ever stretching his thoughts to things eternal, in which his interest is infinitely greater than in any thing here?

We think highly, and justly so, of the advantage which an acquaintance with history gives a man over one who has no knowledge of any events besides those of his own times. We are highly gratified in being made acquainted with the origin, and early history, of the country in which we were born, and of the nation to which we belong. We are sensible that *travelling*, and seeing other countries and other customs than our own, improves and enlarges the mind. It adds to our stock of ideas, and gives us a greater field for contemplation. It is thereby the means of removing local prejudices, and of lessening the influence of all ideas connected with that of self.

What, then, must it be to be enabled, by the help of revelation, to look so far back as to the origin of the world, to range through all the successive dispensations of God to man, to contemplate more especially the promulgation of the gospel, and to look forward to that glorious state of things which is to take place in consequence of its universal spread; to look farther still to the resurrection of the dead, and the day of final judgment, followed by a never-ending eternity!

What a fund of great thoughts do these great subjects supply, and how scanty must be the furniture of that man's mind, let him be a philosopher, an historian, a statesman, or whatever else the world can make him, or he can make himself, compared with that of the meanest Christian, to whom these great and extensive views of things are familiar!

The contemplation of such objects as these, is sufficient to raise a man above the world, and all the little pursuits and gratifications of it. Will such a man as this bestow much thought on the indulgence of his appetites and passions? Will he envy any man the enjoyment of any thing that this world can give him; or will he have a wish to aggrandize himself, or his family, in it?

He will, on the contrary, be rather apt to despise it too

much, so as to attend too little to his proper duty in it, so engrossed will his mind be with things of infinitely greater magnitude and importance. This would unavoidably be the case, were it not that things *temporal*, though of little moment in themselves, have the advantage of being present; whereas things *eternal*, though infinitely momentous, are distant. But, my brethren, faith can bring them near, and give them an influence as if they were present. *Faith*, as the apostle says, [*Heb.* xi. 1,] "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

If these be the true sources of that comprehension of mind which gives one man a superiority over another; if, as is commonly and justly said, it be *great thoughts* that make *great minds*, little cause has the poor Christian to envy even the most enlightened, and still less scholars in general, who are not Christians. The study of the Scriptures alone contributes so much to this great end, that, all that learning can do more is a mere trifle, and without it infinitely little. The best-informed unbeliever has but a scanty furniture of mind, few elements, as we may say, of greatness, dignity, and happiness, compared with the most unlearned Christian; and with respect to proper intellectual improvement, ought to rank far below him. He has comparatively, though more in number, yet much smaller objects to contemplate; and what is of more consequence, he is much more in danger of giving into low pursuits and gratifications, which debase the nature of man, and render him of little value in society.

All the greater virtues, such as patience in suffering, forgiveness of injuries, general benevolence, and habitual devotion, imply great comprehension of mind, or an union of more ideas and impressions than the present moment would furnish; but with them the mind of a Christian is already furnished, and therefore those sublime virtues are easily acquired by a Christian, and not easily, if at all, by those who are not Christians.

We all begin our career in intellectual life with mere selfishness, attending to impressions made upon us by means of the external senses; for we have no other inlets of ideas or knowledge. Of course, we are for some time wholly occupied about ourselves, and do not learn to look beyond ourselves, and to feel for others, but in consequence of experience, aided by reflection, which joins distant ideas to those that are present. And no reflection is of so much use in carrying us beyond ourselves, and inspiring benevolence for others, as that of all mankind having one common

Parent, of our being training by him in the same school of discipline here, and our being heirs of the same hope of immortal life hereafter. For want of these great views, unbelievers cannot so easily look beyond themselves, and interest themselves for others.

With respect to patience and forbearance, they are virtues that can only rise out of reflection; for the pressure of pain, and evils of any kind, naturally makes men impatient, wishing and endeavouring to procure immediate relief. It is thinking, and taking distant views of things, that make men patient, and we are best enabled to bear present evils by means of a firm belief in the justice and goodness of that Being from whom we believe they come. But a person who never looks to this *first cause*, will naturally indulge to fretfulness, impatience, and resentment, against *second causes*, the immediate occasion of his sufferings; which a Christian considers as the mere instruments in the hand of another, and that the most benevolent of all beings.

The first feeling of injury prompts to resentment and malice. But when a man can look beyond the first impression, the immediate occasion and instrument of the evils he experiences; when he thinks how little it is in the power of any person to injure him, that whatever is done to him is by the permission of God, who has the best intentions in permitting and appointing every thing, he attends so little to *second causes*, as to feel no resentment at all. Like *David*, with respect to *Shimei*, [2 *Sam.* xvi. 10,] he can say, *Let him curse, since God hath bidden him curse;* and like our Saviour, he can say with respect to all his enemies, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." [*Luke* xxiii. 34.] Thus in suppressing resentment and forgiving injuries, there is true greatness of mind; and in revenge, real littleness.

That greatest of all virtues, and the immediate parent of several others, *habitual devotion*, naturally arises from considering the Supreme Being as the proper cause of all events, and at the same time as our proper parent, benefactor, moral governor, and final judge. This faith will inspire the mind with the greatest reverence for God, with respect for his authority, and intire confidence in the dispensations of his providence. With this faith we shall live as constantly *seeing*, and having intercourse with, *Him that is invisible;* and a more elevated, dignified, and happy state of mind cannot be conceived.

But the man who either believes that there is no God, or

who lives without him in the world, wholly thoughtless of his being, his perfection, and his providence, cannot attain to this elevation and serene happiness. His views are bounded by the creature, and he never looks up to the Creator. If he have any remains of pious sentiments from early impressions not altogether effaced, the idea of God will even give him pain and displeasure. He will profane his name in oaths and execrations, and make a mock of things the most sacred; a sure mark of a low, as well as of a depraved mind.

With the rejection of Christianity, an attentive observer will always find the loss or diminution of these more sublime virtues; for they necessarily depend upon a regard to Providence and a future state; and it is generally attended with an evident debasement of character, by sinking into low vices, debauchery, and profaneness; or if external virtue be preserved, from habit, and some of the greater kinds, as public spirit and generosity, be cherished, it is from such principles as cannot be depended upon with respect to the bulk of mankind, viz. an enlightened selfishness, and a regard to posthumous fame; and these will operate more upon great occasions, than in the uniform tenor of peaceful life.

To the sublime consolations of religion, which are most wanted in the evening of life, unbelievers must necessarily be strangers. And if there be a happy season for man in this life, it is that which is enjoyed towards the close of it; when the labours of life are nearly over, when the dangers of virtue are passed, and a calm retrospect can be taken of the course of Divine Providence respecting ourselves, our dearest interests, and the world, from an unshaken faith in a righteous and benevolent Governor of the universe, and when a joyful prospect of immortality can be indulged without allay. In this state of mind, the prospect of death itself is pleasing. Having seen and enjoyed enough of this life, a good man looks forward with pleasing expectation towards another, singing the Christian's triumphant song, *O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?*

I shall now conclude with a few reflections.

1. As true dignity and comprehension of mind cannot be attained without a previous progressive state, beginning with the most limited views, so it may have been necessary that the world itself, including the human species as a part of it, should go through a previous imperfect state before it arrive at that happy one in which, from the prophecies of Scripture, we are led to expect that it will terminate;

and that, in a way which we may not be able distinctly to see at present, it may contribute, and be really necessary to that glorious catastrophe.

The world has, indeed, continued in a comparatively low and wretched state, full of vice and misery, men having, by their ambition, and other ungoverned passions, been the cause of much evil, instead of happiness to each other, for many ages. But long as the period appears, it may be no more with respect to the duration of the world, than infancy or childhood is to the age of man; and hereafter the wisdom and goodness of God may be as easily vindicated with respect to the one as it is with respect to the other. Let us apply the same observation to the corruptions of true religion. They may hereafter appear to have been equally necessary to the perfect understanding, to the firm establishment, and, consequently, to the happy effects of it in future time.

2. Let us all, sensible of the great importance of true religion, do every thing in our power to extend the knowledge and influence of it wherever we have opportunity. To this end, let us labour to get just views of it ourselves, in order that we may give a just representation of it to others. And the true doctrine of the Scriptures concerning the unity of God, and the placability of his nature, are in themselves infinitely more agreeable to reason than the doctrines of a multiplicity of gods, or, which comes to the same thing, of different persons in the godhead, and of his implacability to repenting sinners, without an adequate satisfaction and atonement, and they have a much more pleasing and happy effect upon the mind that contemplates them.

If the pursuit of revenge imply a littleness in the mind of a *man* who gives way to it, it must give us a like low and degrading idea of *God*, and, consequently, tend to give the same turn to his worshippers and imitators. And if the belief of a multiplicity of deities (all of whom are, of course, supposed necessary to the work of creation and providence) imply imperfection in them all, it must proportionably lessen our reverence and debase our devotion.

On the contrary, nothing can be more sublime in itself, or tend more to elevate the mind that contemplates it, than the idea of one great Being, one all-comprehensive Mind, equal to the whole work of creation and providence. By the utmost efforts of our minds, we cannot attain to more than a very imperfect idea of such a Being as this; but the very attempt to contemplate it, fills the mind with the

deepest reverence and the most joyful confidence, and likewise tends to engage our obedience to his will; also in the habitual endeavour to resemble the great object of our worship, we shall study *to purify ourselves, even as he is pure.*

Lastly, if we would derive real advantage from Christianity ourselves, and recommend it to others, we must give due and habitual attention to the great principles of it. We must, with the Psalmist, meditate on these things day and night, and thereby make them familiar to our minds. We must not only know, but be intimately conversant with the Scriptures, which are the only records of this great revelation, and feel an increasing satisfaction in reading and meditating on their important contents; otherwise, we shall be Christians in *name* only, and mere men of the world in reality.

It is not what we think of only occasionally, but what habitually occupies our thoughts, that forms the mind and the character; and this will be discovered by the mind involuntarily reverting to it, and taking pleasure to dwell upon it. Is the man of business, or the man of science, formed without much attention to his object, and taking pleasure in it? You know the contrary. Expect not, then, to become Christians in any other way. You must prize your religion above every thing else, and be ready to sacrifice every thing else to it. It is only when we thus make religion our principal object, that the gospel will teach and enable us to *deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live righteously, soberly, and piously in this present world,* so as to encourage us to look forwards to *that blessed hope, even the glorious appearance of the great God, and of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,* in that great and triumphant day when *corruption shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality.*

DISCOURSE II.

REVELATION THE ONLY REMEDY FOR IDOLATRY AND SUPERSTITION.

ACTS xvii. 30:

The time of their ignorance God winked at.

THE sufficiency of reason, or the light of nature, for the discovery of all useful truth, has been the great boast of unbelievers in divine revelation. But this idea has been the

offspring of a conceit of the powers of the human intellect, in consequence of knowledge acquired in an advanced period of the world, without considering by how slow degrees that knowledge was attained, and especially how much of it was, in reality, derived from that very revelation which they consider as unnecessary.

Without positive instruction, mankind, in the earliest ages, must have been entirely ignorant of every thing on which their existence and happiness most depended. Seeing nothing but *effects*, and unable to trace their true *causes*, they must have wandered in a boundless field of conjecture, of which we see the mind of man to be always exceedingly fertile. Soon finding that there is no effect without some adequate cause, men, who have naturally but little patience of investigation, (for it is only experience that teaches this,) presently imagine something or other to be the cause of every thing that they observe, and they acquiesce in this supposed cause till farther observation shall convince them of their mistake. But what is most to be regretted is, that an opinion of this kind once entertained, especially when it has been recommended by a derivation from remote antiquity, does not easily give way to better judgment.

Whoever were the first of the human race, and by whatever means they came into existence, unless the course of nature was wholly different from what it is known to be now, they must have perished without foreign assistance. Whether men were produced in a state of infancy, or of perfect manhood, will make no difference; because our ideas, the elements of all our knowledge, have no inlets besides the external senses, and these must be used and exercised before they can give us any information of things without us; and these ideas must be variously combined and compared before we could, by their means, form any proper judgment of things, or take any proper and safe measures for our conduct. A child left to itself would be more helpless than any other young animal; it must necessarily perish; and a grown man, with no more knowledge than a new-born child, would be as little able to take care of himself. Whenever, therefore, men were first produced, they must have had some instructions communicated to them by their Maker; so that what we may properly call *divine revelation*, was absolutely necessary in the first stage of our existence.

It is agreeable, however, to the general plan of Providence, that no more supernatural instruction be given to

men than is absolutely necessary to their well-being; and where their own reason and observation were able, in any good measure, to answer the purpose, they have been left to its guidance; though, in this case, much error and much inconvenience have arisen from the false judgments that men, thus left to their own experience and observation, will fall into. One reason of this may be, that knowledge acquired by experience is of much more value than that which is acquired by instruction. It makes a much deeper impression, so as to be more surely retained, and more effectually applied in the conduct of life. This we see in all children. One fall, and consequent hurt, will teach them caution infinitely better than any admonitions of their parents or guides.

Now it has pleased our universal Parent to treat the whole human race as we, if we act wisely, treat children, that is, leave them as much as they safely may be, to themselves, interposing only to prevent some great and fatal evil, of which it was impossible that they should be sufficiently apprized themselves. And if we consider the state of the world in very early ages, destitute of the knowledge that has since been acquired by experience and observation, and the lights that have been derived from revelation, we shall be convinced that some supernatural instruction was highly expedient, if not absolutely necessary, if it was the ultimate intention of our Maker to train men to virtue here, and happiness hereafter.

It has pleased Divine Providence to leave so many of the human race in this state of natural ignorance, and the consequence of it has been so fatal, that we see the greatest reason to be thankful for that supernatural instruction which has been afforded to some, and which has, by their means, been communicated to others. But many persons, in this advanced age of the world, have no idea how great the ignorance of the early ages was, or of what mankind have suffered in consequence of it. It may, therefore, be of use to state a few unquestionable facts, in order to demonstrate this, and to shew that the greater light we now enjoy did not, in reality, come from the use of reason, but from another and higher source.

Whatever the first parents of the human race might have been taught themselves, and endeavoured to teach their posterity, unquestionable history carries us back to a period in which all mankind, with very few exceptions, and those not of a people the most famed for their wisdom, imagined

there was a multiplicity of superior beings directing the affairs of the world; that these deities were of very different dispositions and characters, some disposed to do good, and others to do evil to men; and that their favour was to be procured by rites and ceremonies instituted in their honour, and frequently by actions, some of which are now universally deemed abominable, and others cruel; so that what was called *religion*, was far from having any connexion with good morals.

Divination, magical arts, and necromancy, were also an important part of the Heathen religions. They had a great variety of rules by which to judge of the good or bad success of their schemes and projects, especially appearances in their sacrifices, as the form and position of the entrails of the beasts slain, &c. And in order to gain favour or ensure revenge, they had recourse to various practices, which they had been led to believe had a connexion with the object of their wishes. Also, what to us appears most extraordinary, but it is not the less true, is, that the more ingenious and the more highly civilized any of these ancient nations were, the greater was the number of their superstitious observances.

The proper cause of these wretched superstitions was, as the apostle justly calls it, *ignorance*. It was men's ignorance of nature, and of the true causes of events; but such ignorance as it was not in their power wholly to remove. Things were continually happening unexpected by them, the causes of them being what they could not see or comprehend, and therefore they concluded that the cause was some invisible power, the agency of which no human power or sagacity could controul. But, as at first they had no idea of any thing absolutely *invisible*, they ascribed these events to the influence of such visible objects as the sun, moon, and stars, the greatest and most powerful of the visible agents in nature, imagining that the good and evil which they did, proceeded from design, and, therefore, either that they were themselves intelligent beings, or actuated by intelligent beings residing in them, and directing their influence.

Though mankind in general might retain the idea of one Supreme Mind, which had been communicated to them by their first parents, yet not being able to conceive how one mind could sufficiently attend to every thing, they might think that there were inferior intelligences, to whom different departments in the government of the world were delegated.

And from this principle directing their chief attention to these beings, with whom they supposed they had more immediately to do, they would in time entirely lose sight of the one Supreme; they would have no act of worship directed to him, but would confine their regards to the inferior, and therefore, imperfect beings; and they would unavoidably form their ideas of their *characters* from what they supposed to proceed from them; judging from what they felt themselves, and observed in other persons, what they must *be*, in order to *do* as they did.

Accordingly, we find among Heathen nations characters of their gods little, if at all, superior to those of men; some revengeful, some capricious, and some even libidinous, for proof of which we need only appeal to Homer, and the Grecian mythology in general. It was in order to render themselves acceptable to some of these deities that they inflicted the greatest cruelties upon others, and even upon themselves, courting their favour by the most expensive sacrifices and the most painful mortifications; and to recommend themselves to others, they indulged in such abominable practices as, on any other occasion, they could not help regarding with detestation.

When once the worship of the one true God, a being of perfect purity, as well as infinitely powerful and benevolent, was abandoned, the rest followed of course; and that it was natural, is evident from a similar idolatry and similar rites of worship having been instituted in all ages and in all parts of the world, among the *Egyptians*, *Greeks*, and *Romans*, and also in *Hindostan*, *Mexico*, and *Peru*.

We shall not much wonder at mankind, in very early ages, imagining such bodies as the sun, moon, and stars, and other natural objects, to be animated, if we consider how prone children are to personify every thing that affects them, so as to feel real anger against any thing that is the occasion of pain to them. Even many persons grown up will frequently, before they reflect, be affected in a similar manner. Whole nations of men, whose minds have not been cultivated, at this very day entertain notions exactly similar to those of the ancients, which led the way to idolatry. Thus the people of *Sumatra*, as Dr. Marsden informs us, have the most superstitious respect for the sea, imagining its various motions to be voluntary, and not the effect of the action of the wind upon it.

The arts of magic and divination were equally owing to men's ignorance of the natural causes of events, and their

taking up with fanciful causes instead of them. Nor shall we wonder at the superstition of the ancients, when we reflect upon similar superstition, owing to similar ignorance, in many persons of this enlightened age, in all countries, Christians not excepted.

The ancient Greeks and Romans, in order to obtain their revenge upon any person, made images of wax, wool, and other things, with certain ceremonies, and supposed that by melting, tearing, and otherwise abusing those images, the persons whom they represented would suffer in the same manner. But notions exactly similar to these (the remains, no doubt, of Heathen superstition) exist at this very day. I myself was intimately acquainted with a person of considerable property, who, imagining his sheep to have suffered by witchcraft, drove a stake through one of them while it was alive, and left it to perish in that condition; really thinking that the person who had bewitched them would perish at the same time that the sheep did, though it was not possible for him to have any idea of the manner in which the suffering of the animal could be the cause of the suffering of the witch; and it was not in my power, though he was a man of much knowledge of the world, and of good sense in other respects, to convince him that he had done wrong.

How many have there been, if they cannot be so readily found at present, who have professed to cure wounds by practising on the weapon with which they were made, to cure warts by burying in the ground pieces of flesh with which they have been rubbed, which flesh, it is further curious to observe, must have been stolen; and how many are there who still pretend to cure the ague, and other diseases, by various *charms*, without any proper medical treatment! All these practices were suggested by ideas exactly similar to those which were the foundation of all the superstition and idolatry of the Heathens, proceeding from an equal ignorance of the causes of natural effects, and men's substituting imaginary causes in their places.

The ancient Heathens judged of the success of enterprises by certain animals crossing their paths in particular directions, or certain birds appearing to the right hand or to the left of them. But there are similar appearances that are deemed lucky or unlucky among all ignorant persons. Do not sailors fancy they can procure a wind by whistling? And do not some gamesters really think to change their *luck*, as they call it, at cards, by changing their places at the

table, or even turning round their chairs? Where there is equal ignorance, there will be equal superstition. As to fortune-telling by numberless appearances, and by astrology, or the positions of the stars and planets, there is at this day almost as much of it in practice among ignorant people, persons of fortune and fashion by no means excepted, as ever there was. We shall not wonder at the origin and progress of Heathen superstition, and Heathen idolatry, if we reflect upon what passes under our own eyes.

We shall not wonder at the long continuance of ancient superstitions, unsupported as they are by facts and experience, if we consider, that whatever becomes generally believed, on whatever ground, continues to be believed; the faith of the father being, in most cases, easily transmitted to the son, without any examination of his own, from his having seen no reason to distrust it. Also a single fact favourable to an established opinion, will be more talked of, and thereby make more impression, than many that are unfavourable to it, which will be accounted for on some principle or other, so as not to invalidate the general maxim.

This we see in various ill-founded prognostics concerning the weather, from its raining, or not raining, on particular days in the week, at certain seasons of the year; which you will hear recited, and asserted to have been confirmed by the uniform experience of old men, who received them from their fathers, who likewise attested their truth; though you well know that it is impossible, in the nature of things, that they should have any just foundation at all. In fact, rules concerning the weather depending on the moon are no better founded, though they retain almost universal credit. Indications of the future fortune of persons, from moles, and other natural marks on their bodies, though laughed at by men of sense, are still regarded by the vulgar. Being of great antiquity, even such silly maxims as these will not soon be universally given up.

Now considering the shocking and abominable nature of the practices which are known to have prevailed among the Heathens, as belonging to their religion, which nothing but a deeper knowledge of nature than they had any means of attaining, could prevent, was it not wise and kind in the Universal Parent of mankind, to interpose, and forbid such hurtful practices, by instituting a religion that should be favourable to decency and good morals? And such was the religion of the patriarchs and of the Jews.

This was the only religion that taught the great doctrine

of the unity of God, the maker and immediate governor of all things, that this God is omnipresent and omniscient, possessed of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness: and every thing tending to impurity or cruelty, was strictly forbidden in his worship. Doctrines so truly sublime, and so favourable to virtue, we in vain look for in the religion of the *Egyptians*, *Babylonians*, *Tyrians*, or any other ancient nations, the most famed for their civilization and knowledge.

These doctrines we are taught in our catechisms. They are consequently among the earliest impressions on our minds, and therefore we are apt to think them *natural*, and of easy acquirement. But the history of all ages and nations proves the contrary. And if we duly reflect upon the subject, we shall be sensible that the doctrines of the unity of God, of his immediate universal government, and his perfect benevolence, were far too sublime for the early comprehension of mankind. The infinite variety of objects in nature, and of events in life, would naturally suggest the idea of various, and variously disposed, beings for the authors of them, just as different kinds of productions and actions are naturally ascribed to different characters in men.

It is true that there is, in reality, an *uniformity*, and an *unity of design*, in the works of nature and providence; but this is not easily discovered. The first thing that strikes us is the infinite *diversity* of objects, some affecting us agreeably, and others disagreeably, some good, and others, as we are apt to think, evil; and hence naturally arises the doctrine of at least *two principles* in nature, and these opposite to one another. And though, since there is a prevalence of good, it was concluded that the good principle was superior to the evil one, yet it would not seem that the good principle could wholly exclude the evil one; and since men have universally thought it more behoved them to conciliate the favour of evil beings, than that of good ones, who were not disposed to injure them, hence the great prevalence of rites of a horrid and disgusting nature, in all the Heathen religions.

That mankind, if left to themselves, would ever have attained to the idea of one Supreme, uncontrolled Cause, without whose appointment or permission nothing can ever come to pass, and that nothing comes to pass but what has the best tendency, being really, though not apparently, subservient to good, is highly improbable. Still less probable is it, that the moral character of the one Cause of all things should have been so established, as to be the foundation of a rational and useful worship. So far were men, though

with every advantage of cultivation in other respects, from this degree of knowledge, that though it is probable that just maxims of religion were communicated to the first parents of mankind, appearances in nature were thought to be so unfavourable to them, that they became extinct, and a monstrous polytheism, the parent of the most abominable licentiousness, universally prevailed.

So prone are men to entertain an idea of different deities, superintending different provinces in nature, and the administration of human affairs, that even after the dispensation of the gospel, when it might be thought that the doctrine of the unity of God, and the administration of providence by himself, on which so much stress is laid in the Scriptures, had been fully established, idolatry again crept into the worship of imperfect mortals. The human mind was again distracted, and the human character again debased, by an attention to a multiplicity of objects of worship, and the one true God was again overlooked, even by Christians.

Wholly occupied in their devotion to the Virgin Mary, and innumerable other saints and angels, whom alone the superstitious Catholics address on all the different occasions of human life, one, for example, for sailors, and others for other descriptions of men, or men in other situations, the worship of Christians came to have as many objects as that of the Heathens. Christian idolatry had, however, this advantage over Heathenism, that no Christian saint was the patron of vice, though the influence of Christianity with respect to morals was greatly diminished; many substitutes being provided for moral virtue, which the worship of one God, and that a Being of perfect purity, would never have admitted.

How, then, does experience, or observation, justify us in supposing that supernatural instruction was not necessary with respect to the great articles of the unity of God, and the purity of his worship, as a guard against immorality in the worshippers? As it were to convince us of the contrary, God was pleased to permit whole nations of men, the most famed for their wisdom and knowledge in other respects, to sink into the most deplorable ignorance of his nature and worship, teaching a chosen and despised few the true knowledge of himself, and the purity of his worship, and by their means gradually enlightening the minds of the rest of mankind; and thankful should we be that this salutary light has reached us.

If we consider (but few persons have sufficient knowledge

of antiquity to do it) how much of men's time was taken up by omens, and the business of divination, so as miserably to distress their minds, and impede their exertions, in all Heathen countries, we shall be equally thankful for the positive, authoritative prohibition of such superstitious observances, by the Universal Parent of mankind, before their own reason could discover the vanity and folly of them. What imaginable connexion had the eagerness of chickens to eat their food in the morning, or the particular form of the liver of a victim, killed at that time, with the event of a battle in the course of the day? And yet the Romans, experienced as they were in the art of war, and who, therefore, had sufficient opportunity to discover the fallacy of those things, were never able to divest themselves of the idea of their being true prognostics. Of what consequence was it whether an army began its march before or after the full moon? And yet the *Lacedemonians*, the most famous, not only for bravery, but for military skill in general, were the most rigid observers of it. And if, towards the latter periods of the *Grecian* and *Roman* histories, the general and principal officers had the good sense to get above so silly a prejudice, they were under the necessity of deceiving the common soldiers by false reports of omens.

But, indeed, the wisest of the Greeks and Romans were often among the most superstitious, and their affairs suffered most materially in consequence of it. The finest army that the *Athenians* ever sent out, and eventually the state itself, was ruined by the general refusing to put to sea during an eclipse of the moon.*

The business of divination and omens made a great part of the religion of all the Heathen nations, whether civilized or not. How, then, should that of the Jews be the only one that escaped? But by their lawgiver they were taught to hold all those practices in just contempt and abhorrence. Of themselves they could no more have been able to see the folly of these observances than other people. They must, therefore, have had their superior information from a Being who knew more of the real laws of nature, and the true causes of events, than any of the human race; and who did not choose that this deplorable ignorance, so debasing to the mind, and so prejudicial to men's affairs, should be universal; but that one nation, by no means so much improved in other respects as their neighbours, should be

* The *general* was *Nicias*. See his Life in *Plutarch*.

free from it; and that by their means this freedom from superstition, as well as idolatry, should be extended to all the world.

How prone men are to superstition, we see even among Christians, notwithstanding the light of divine revelation, and not only in the remains of Heathenism, which are numberless among the common people in all Christian countries, but in things peculiar to Christianity. Whatever connects the favour of God and future happiness with any thing besides moral virtue, is superstition, and of a most debasing and mischievous nature; and yet almost the whole of what is called Popery is of this kind. Time was when a man who had endowed a church, made a pilgrimage, confessed to a priest, discharged his penance, received absolution, and was buried in the habit of a Franciscan monk, or who had provided for masses to be said for him after he was dead, thought himself as sure of the happiness of heaven as if he had kept all the commandments of God. And too many there are, even among Protestants, who are far from laying the stress that they ought to do upon their own personal virtue.

The Scriptures, however, teach the soundest and purest morality, free from every thing approaching to superstition; and when they shall be thoroughly understood, and duly attended to, but not till then, this miserable, debasing superstition will be banished the world. And then will our undivided homage be paid to the one living and true God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and he will be worshipped by purity of heart and integrity of life, *in spirit and in truth.* But it is revelation only that supplies the proper and effectual cure of superstition, in this form, as well as in every other, assigning the true cause of the desired effect.

More evidently still are we indebted to revelation, and not at all to human reason, however cultivated, for the knowledge of *a future state.* The thicker is the veil that nature throws over every thing belonging to the state of the dead, the more busy has the imagination of man been in prying into it. When it had been imagined, that not only the celestial bodies, but the earth, seas, rivers, trees, and all the inanimate parts of nature, had some invisible power accompanying them, so that they could be invoked, and their assistance engaged by men, a similar invisible power, or principle, was soon supposed to reside in men and other animals, and even to remain with them after they were

dead, so that dead men became the objects of worship, as well as other parts of nature.

Dead men, however, appear to have been invoked for the purpose of necromancy, or in order to pry into futurity, before they were made the proper objects of worship, or ranked among the *gods*, capable of doing good or evil to living men; and this practice took place before they had any distinct idea of an immaterial soul. For when, in consequence of these arts of necromancy, used by *the witch of Endor*, Samuel was supposed to be raised from the dead, there was the appearance of an old man, habited just as Samuel had been, rising out of the earth, which could not have been the natural place of an immaterial soul; and it is not called the soul of Samuel, but Samuel himself.* Nor is there in the Scriptures any mention of the soul of any particular person as a substance distinct from the body, either as existing in this life, or in another. The rich man and *Lazarus*, in our Saviour's parable, are not described as the souls of those men, but as the men themselves, supposed to be removed into another state.

On whatever principle it was that dead men were thought to be accessible to the living, the modes of application to them, in the arts of necromancy, form a great part of the religion of all the ancient nations; and by this they not only miserably bewildered themselves, and lost their time in a fruitless pursuit, but were led, as is well known, to some horrid and cruel practices, numberless living persons having been sacrificed to the manes of the dead.

Among the Jews alone, of all the nations of the world, were the detestable arts of necromancy strictly forbidden. Their religion was the only one that was free from this great stain. Now, to what could this remarkable exception have been owing, but to a wisdom superior to their own, or to that of man; which, before they themselves could have discovered that the practices were vain, prevented their adopting them, and revealed to them what is really true and most important, with respect to the state of the dead, and which no human reason could ever have discovered, viz. that at a future period they are all to rise again, when all men will receive according to their works.

This is the great and peculiar doctrine of revelation, and especially of the *New Testament*, Jesus Christ having been commissioned *to bring life and immortality to light by his*

* See 1 *Sam.* xxviii. 12, Vol. XI. pp. 386, 387.

gospel, [2 *Tim.* i. 10,] giving the most ample proof of a divine mission, by working unquestionable miracles, and what is more, himself dying in the most public manner, and rising again within a limited time, as the most satisfactory proof and exemplification of his doctrine.

To this divine light let us diligently attend, and be thankful to the great Father of lights that to us, in this remote part of the world, *so great a light has shined.* Let us rejoice that we are called out of the state of Heathenish darkness and superstition that I have described to you, and which it pleased God, in his infinite wisdom, so long to wink at. [*Acts* xvii. 30.] "But now," as the apostle continues, "he *calls upon* all men every where to repent, *since* he hath appointed a day," and given sufficient notice of it, "in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained," even *Jesus Christ.*

DISCOURSE III.

Of the Miracles

BY WHICH THE DELIVERANCE OF THE ISRAELITES FROM THEIR BONDAGE IN EGYPT WAS EFFECTED.

EXOD. xiv. 31:

And Israel saw the great works which the Lord did upon the Egyptians, and the people feared the Lord, and his servant Moses.

THERE is nothing so interesting to man as the intercourse he has with his Maker, because his happiness is most nearly concerned in it; and the more interested we are in any thing, the more it behoves us to see that we be not imposed upon, but that we have sufficient ground for our belief. Reason and revelation are equally enemies to implicit faith, and require that we do not give our assent to important propositions without the most satisfactory evidence.

Though when any object of faith is of a pleasing nature, we may be thought disposed to take up with less evidence, yet the magnitude of any thing will always require a proportionably clear proof. Thus we cannot doubt but that the apostles were pleased with the idea of their Master's

resurrection, yet the greatness of the event begat a disposition to incredulity; and we read that when they were first informed of it, and upon no apparently suspicious ground, *they believed not through joy.* [*Luke* xxiv. 41.] They thought the news too good to be true, and they did not give their full assent to the joyful tidings till they had the most overbearing evidence, such as no disposition to incredulity could resist.

It behoves us, therefore, to examine with the most scrupulous attention, every circumstance in histories of intercourse between God and man; and at this time I shall select for your attentive consideration, the first of which we have an account from eye-witnesses, I mean the deliverance of the Israelites from their state of servitude in Egypt, and the promulgation of the law from Mount Sinai, recorded in the writings of Moses, who was himself the chief instrument in these wonderful events.

Prior to this, the Israelites had been in Egypt about two hundred years, about the latter half of which term they had been reduced to a state of the most abject servitude. This was evidently the case at the birth of Moses, who was himself saved in an extraordinary manner from being drowned, in consequence of an order to throw every male child of the Israelites into the river, and he was eighty years old when he received his commission to effect their deliverance. It is probable, therefore, that they had been enslaved and oppressed in various forms, about a hundred years, though the order for the destruction of the male children had been withdrawn.

During this period of extreme oppression, it is probable that the Israelites had in general ceased to worship the God of their fathers, and had conformed to the superstitions of their masters, which they would do the more readily from seeing the very flourishing state they were in, and their own abject condition: for, in all the early ages of the world, outward prosperity was considered as the consequence of the public religion of any people, and the better condition of any nation with respect to any other, as a proof of the superiority of the gods they worshipped.

God had informed *Abraham*, that his posterity would be in bondage in Egypt; but that after four hundred years (reckoning, as it appears, from the time of the prediction) they would be delivered, and become a great nation. This promise, however, they seem to have forgotten, or to have lost

all faith in. *Moses* himself had abandoned his countrymen, and had been forty years resident in *Arabia*, where he had married a wife, so that it is probable he had no expectation of any thing very flattering being reserved for his nation. He had even neglected the right of circumcision, which was the peculiar symbol of the Divine promise to the descendants of Abraham: for it was only in consequence of the interposition of an angel, or some supernatural appearance, that he was compelled to perform this rite on his son, on his return to Egypt.

In this situation of things there did not appear to be any prospect of relief from this state of bondage. And, alarmed as the *Egyptians* were at the increase of the *Israelites*, it may be taken for granted that the use of arms was strictly forbidden them, while their masters appear to have been the most warlike people in that age of the world; having not only an armed infantry, but multitudes of horses and chariots for war.

Supposing the Israelites to have been so oppressed as to be driven to despair, and to have come to a determination to abandon the country at all events, it is probable that they would have sought some place of retreat, where they were likely to meet with the least resistance, either from the country being thinly inhabited, or inhabited by an unwarlike people. But instead of this, they not only emancipate themselves, but take possession of a country inhabited by the most warlike people in the world next to their masters, if they were not equal to them; for the inhabitants of Canaan were likewise practised in war, and had horses and chariots like the Egyptians. And this warlike people was not taken by surprise, but had sufficient notice of the invasion, and, no doubt, took every method in their power to defeat it.

By what means, then, was this extraordinary deliverance of the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt, and their settlement in the land of Canaan, effected? Moses, whose account was written at the time, and with all the minuteness and other marks of authenticity of any modern journal, informs us, that it was in consequence of a series of miraculous interpositions; and his account was received as genuine and unquestionable by those who were the best judges of its truth, viz. those among whom it was written; and it continues to be believed by them to this day, though they were frequently indisposed to the religious institutions

which were enjoined them in consequence of this very deliverance.

The substance of the account given by Moses is as follows: while he was in *Arabia*, where he had resided forty years, following his occupation of a shepherd, the appearance of a flame of fire in a bush, which was not consumed by it, attracted his attention. On his approach to it, an audible voice issued out of it, from a person who announced himself to be the God of his fathers, who had seen the affliction of his people, and commissioned him to go and deliver them. When he hesitated, and shewed the most extreme backwardness to undertake the commission, and said that his nation would not believe that God had sent him, he was ordered to throw down the staff that was in his hand, when it instantly became a serpent, and then to take it up, when it became a staff again in his hand. He was likewise directed to stretch forth his hand, when it became leprous, and to pull it to him again, when it was restored sound as before.

These extraordinary appearances convinced him that the Being by whom he was addressed, was, indeed, the God of his fathers, to whom similar instances of power had been ascribed. He, therefore, though with extreme reluctance, went to the heads of his nation, and, as he had been ordered, exhibited the same miracles before them, who were thereby convinced that God had sent him. He then went to *Pharaoh*, and openly demanded leave for his countrymen to go into the Wilderness, in order to make a sacrifice to their own God; and after repeated miracles, to convince him of the authority with which he made the demand, some of which consisted of the most awful judgments upon him and his nation, Pharaoh's consent was obtained. But repenting of his compliance, he pursued them, and following them through the Red Sea, which had divided to make way for them, he and his army perished. After this, according to the account of Moses, the Israelites entered the Wilderness, where they were fed by a miracle forty years. We are also informed, that, after their leaving Egypt, God, in an audible voice, delivered to them the ten commandments from Mount Sinai, as the foundation of a new institution of religion, the particulars of which were communicated to Moses himself.

Let us now consider how this remarkable story is circumstanced with respect to its credibility, both in the age of

Moses himself, and at this distance of time; who were the witnesses of these events, what motives they had to examine into their truth, and what effects they produced in their conduct.

It is evident, that neither the Israelites, nor the Egyptians, were at all predisposed to expect such events as are recorded. The Israelites seem to have given themselves up to despair, and to have acquiesced in their abject condition. Moses had fled, and seems to have had no thought of ever returning to Egypt; and the Egyptians were far from having any apprehensions of losing such an useful set of servants as the Israelites were; so that there does not appear to have been any sufficient natural cause of exciting the hopes of the one, or the fears of the other.

They who suppose that the Israelites were emancipated by natural means, consider Moses as a bold and able politician. But he does not appear, in the whole history, to have shewn either much courage, or much sagacity. He had nothing in him of an enterprising nature, and never had that confidence in himself which was necessary for so great an undertaking. Of this every part of his history, which is wonderfully consistent with itself, is a proof.

Had Moses been of an enterprising disposition, it would, no doubt, have appeared earlier, and would not have lain dormant till he was eighty years old, when he had resided so long in a foreign country as to be in a manner unknown to his countrymen, and not likely to have much influence with them. His having been educated in the court of Pharaoh, if it was not forgotten, would lead the Egyptians to watch him with the greatest care, so as to give him the fewest opportunities of exciting any revolt among his countrymen.

Had he had any scheme of this kind, he would, no doubt, have concealed himself among his countrymen, and would not have applied to Pharaoh till he had prepared them for resistance, and had taken his measures to defeat the attempts of the Egyptians to prevent their escape; whereas, he appears to have used no precautions of this kind. No arms, or stores, were provided, no alliance made with other nations, and, in short, nothing was done which any sensible man must have seen to be necessary for the success of so great an enterprise.

The emancipation of the Israelites, therefore, in this state of things, does not appear to have been effected by the

policy of man, and consequently it is the more probable that, since it was effected, it was by the immediate hand of God, in the manner related by Moses.

Moses was neither a warrior nor an orator, so that he was destitute of every natural requisite for such an undertaking as the emancipation of his countrymen from the power of the Egyptians. The impediment he had in his speech laid him under the necessity of employing his brother Aaron even to speak for him; and when, in the course of the history, a battle was to be fought, Joshua commanded, while he only prayed at a distance. Such was his diffidence of himself, that he was several times upon the point of abandoning his charge altogether, unable to contend with the many difficulties with which he was surrounded. When he was much embarrassed with business, he was relieved, not by any sagacity of his own, but by the sensible advice of his father-in-law Jethro.

Whatever Moses might have been taught of the learning of the Egyptians, it either amounted to very little, or, if it had any relation to the powers of nature, he retained but little of it, as he seems to have been imposed upon by the tricks of the magicians, who imitated his miracles; for with the greatest simplicity he says, that those *magicians* did the very same that he did, in changing their rods into serpents, *Exod.* vi. 11, water into blood, *ver.* 22, and in bringing frogs upon the land, *Ch.* viii. 7. From this he would probably infer, that these magicians were assisted by some superior beings, but that the power of his God was greater than that of theirs. Of this he could have no doubt, from the serpent into which Aaron's rod was changed, swallowing up those which had been substituted in the place of their rods, and especially from their not being able to remove the plagues with which his God had afflicted them.

As this persuasion was sufficient for his purpose, and would encourage him to persist in what he had undertaken, he was permitted, as far as appears, to remain ignorant of their arts. The frequent intervention of superior beings, and the power of certain forms of words and ceremonies, to bring down and to direct the agency of those beings, was the belief of all mankind in the early ages of the world; and it was nothing but Christianity which led to the better philosophy of modern times, that has undeceived mankind in this respect. This belief has even still great power over the vulgar in all Christian countries; *charms*, as they are called, being in daily use for the cure of disorders, and

many other purposes. Moses had no doubt of the reality of his own miracles, being conscious that he had recourse to no artifice whatever, and, believing that the Egyptian priests had supernatural assistance of a similar nature, though inferior to that which accompanied him, he relates what appeared to him to be the fact, on both sides, with equal simplicity.

That the miracles of *Moses* could not have been any trick, is evident from the magnitude of them, and from other circumstances attending them. In the first instance, it was not a small quantity of water, such as might have been contained in a bason, that appeared to have been converted into blood, or to become red like blood, which was probably all that the Egyptian magicians effected, and which many persons at this day could perform as well as they, but it was all the water of the river, so that the people could not make any use of it, but were obliged to dig wells.* As the like never happened to this river before, nor has happened to that or any other river since, it is evident that there must have been a miracle in the case. This change must also have affected the river through the whole of its extent, and have continued a considerable time, otherwise fresh water would soon have diluted the vitiated, and in a short time the river would have purged itself. Supposing this change in the river to have been introduced by some natural, but at present unknown cause, yet as it operated only at the time that Moses foretold that it would, there must have been something miraculous in his foreknowledge of that event; for he could not himself have been able to effect what he declared would certainly come to pass.

This extraordinary miracle continued seven days, and by what means this change in the river ceased, we are not told; but presently after came the plague of frogs, [*Exod.* viii. 6,] which did not consist in the introduction of a few of them into one particular place, but infested the whole land of Egypt, and yet on the prayer of Moses they all died in the towns and villages, in one day, and remained only in the river.

Allowing Moses to have learned some tricks of *legerdemain* of the Egyptian magicians, he could not have been more expert than his masters, especially as he had been out of the country forty years; and in the mean time they could not have lost, but, probably, would have gained skill in

* See on *Exod.* vii. 21, Vol. XI. p. 133.

their arts, so that they might easily have detected any trick of his. Besides, he was but one man, or at most was only assisted by his brother Aaron; whereas they were many, which gives a great advantage in things of this nature.

In the next miracle, "all the dust of the land," it is said, [*Ch.* viii. 17,] "became lice, *upon* man and *upon* beast," that is, the quantity was so great, that it seemed as if all the dust of the country had been converted into lice. After this, [*Ch.* viii. 24,] *a swarm of flies* filled the whole country, and yet, on the prayer of Moses, [*ver.* 31,] they were all removed, and not one remained.

In the next place, on the word of Moses, [*Ch.* ix. 3, 6,] "a grievous murrain" fell "upon all the cattle of Egypt," but not upon those of the Israelites, the day after it was threatened; and then, on the simple sprinkling of ashes into the air, [*ver.* 10,] the plague of *boils* came upon man and upon beast, and even upon the magicians themselves, [*ver.* 11,] while they stood in the presence of *Moses* and *Pharaoh*, which shews that they had no power to counteract that which accompanied Moses.

After this, a grievous hail-storm, accompanied with thunder and lightning, a thing never known in that country, and so severe, that not only the more tender herbs, but even the trees of the field were broken by it; and yet upon that part of the country which the Israelites inhabited, there was no hail. [*Vers.* 22—26.] This calamity, contrary to its usual nature, must have continued some time; but at the intreaty of *Pharaoh*, and the prayer of *Moses*, it immediately ceased.

After the hail followed the locusts, which devoured every green thing in the whole land; and this also, at the relenting of *Pharaoh*, and the prayer of *Moses*, was entirely removed. [*Ch.* x. 12—19.]

The next miracle was an extraordinary darkness where the Egyptians lived, while it continued light with the Israelites. [*Vers.* 21—23.] And the last miracle was of a still more extraordinary nature, viz. the death of the first-born, and of the first-born only, of man and of beast too, in one particular night, through the whole land of Egypt, while not one of the Israelites died, and this peremptorily foretold before the event. [*Ch.* xi. 5—7; xii. 29, 30.]

Things of this magnitude could never have been effected by art, and it is evident that the magicians of Egypt were sensible that they were produced by supernatural power; for, upon the miracle of the lice they could not help confessing it: "This," said they, "is the finger of God."

(*Exod.* viii. 12.) On this they desisted from making any more attempts to imitate the miracles of Moses, afraid, probably, to proceed any farther.

In order to commemorate the most extraordinary event, the sparing the first-born of *Israel*, while those of the *Egyptians* were destroyed, a peculiar rite was instituted, and announced before the event. [*Ch.* xii. 3—28, 43—50.] It consisted of killing and eating a lamb with particular ceremonies, at that time of every future year, to be continued as long as they should be a nation, the first time of celebration taking place on the very night on which the event to be commemorated happened. No record of any event could be more unexceptionable than this; so that the continuance of the custom, which all Jews keep up to this day, is an unquestionable proof of the reality of the fact, much more than any other known custom is a proof of any other fact connected with it, as that of our making bonfires in commemoration of the gunpowder-plot in England; the event commemorated, and the sign of it, taking place at the same instant of time, and the event being recorded while it was fresh in the memory of all the witnesses of it, who were not a few individuals, but a whole nation, and that the least disposed to credulity, as their whole history and their present character abundantly prove.

The passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea, was a miracle on a still larger scale, and had greater consequences, viz. the total destruction of *Pharaoh's* great host of armed chariots and horses, and of himself along with them. That this great event should be accounted for in a natural way, is absolutely impossible. Had the waters been driven back by a strong wind, as nothing but the continued force of the wind could have kept them in that situation, it would not have been possible for man or beast, and still more for chariots, to have passed during the blowing of it, and yet it is evident that they did it, and at their leisure.* Besides, the waters were held back on *both sides*, which could not have been effected by a wind, blowing in any one direction whatever. The former of these observations will apply to the passage of the Israelites through the river Jordan, which divided to make way for them during the season of its overflowing its banks, and which continued a whole day, as that through the Red Sea continued the whole night.

The effect of these miracles, and especially of this last,

* See Vol. XI. pp. 147, 148.

impressed the people greatly. They were not things which they had heard of others, but what they had seen themselves; for, as we read in my text, *Exod.* xiv. 31, "Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians, and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses."* They were convinced that, notwithstanding the boasted wisdom of the Egyptians, and their great superiority to all other nations, (for not only *Babylon*, but even *Nineveh*, the mother of Babylon, had no existence at that time,) notwithstanding their immense armed force, their horses and their chariots; and notwithstanding their devotedness to their gods, for which they were always celebrated, neither their policy, their arms, nor their gods, could avail them against the power of Jehovah, who was their own God, when it was thus wonderfully and seasonably exerted. And we find, in the course of the history, that the impression which these events made on all the neighbouring nations was very great, and that they ever after retained an idea of the superiority of the God of Israel to their own deities, though this did not induce them to relinquish their worship, it being the fixed persuasion of all mankind in those early ages, that there were many gods, or invisible powers, on whom different nations or districts, and different provinces in nature, depended.

The effect which it was apprehended the report of these miracles would have on the neighbouring nations, is thus expressed in the song of Moses, *Exod.* xv. 14—16, 18: "The people shall hear and be afraid; sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestine. Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed, the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away; fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm shall they be as still as a stone.—The Lord shall reign for ever and ever."

We see how the impression that these miracles made upon the *Philistines* remained upon their minds in the time of *Samuel;* for, on the news of the ark being brought into the camp of the Israelites, they express the greatest apprehensions. 1 *Sam.* iv. 7, 8: "And the Philistines were afraid; for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? These are the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the Wilderness." And in

* See Vol. XI. pp. 149, 150.

their consultations about sending back the ark, after they had suffered by detaining it, they say, 1 *Sam.* vi. 6, "Wherefore, then, do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts, when he had wrought wonderfully among them? Did they not let the people go, and they departed?" We may judge from this, how generally these extraordinary facts were at that time known, and what an idea they excited of the power of the God of Israel.

DISCOURSE IV.

OF THE

Delivery of the Law

FROM MOUNT SINAI, AND OTHER MIRACLES IN THE WILDERNESS.

EXOD xiv. 31:

And Israel saw the great works which the Lord did upon the Egyptians, and the people feared the Lord,—and his servant Moses.

IN discoursing from these words, I have begun to illustrate the evidence of the divine mission of Moses, or the credibility of the miracles on which it is founded. I have already considered those which were exhibited in Egypt, shewing, from their magnitude and other circumstances, especially the effects which they produced, that there could not have been any imposition in the case. I now proceed to direct your attention to those which are recorded as having been exhibited in the Wilderness, and they are of still greater magnitude and importance.

From the Red Sea the Israelites proceeded, without intermission, a journey of three days, through the Wilderness of *Shur*, till they came to a place which was afterwards called *Mara*, where the people murmured because the waters were bitter, so that, though they were exhausted with thirst, they could not drink them. In this distressing situation, of which we, in this climate, can form but an imperfect idea, "the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?" *Exod.* xv. 24.* They would naturally imagine, that the same power which had brought them out

* See Vol. XI. p. 151.

of Egypt, in so wonderful a manner, could easily supply all their wants, and they would be much chagrined when they found themselves disappointed. This murmuring, however, did not imply any disbelief in the power of their God, or in the divine mission of Moses; and God was pleased to relieve their wants by directing Moses to cast a branch of a certain tree into the water, in consequence of which they were able to drink it.

In this place it appears that the people halted, and Moses took this opportunity of exhorting them, and making a kind of covenant with them in the name of God. *Exod.* xv. 25, 26: "There he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them, and said, If thou wilt diligently hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases (or *plagues*) upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians, for I am the Lord that healeth thee."

Notwithstanding this relief from the effects of thirst, the people finding a want of provisions (for what they had made in haste for their journey could not last long) after fifteen days from their leaving Egypt, they again murmured against *Moses* and *Aaron*, and repented that they had left Egypt. *Exod.* xvi. 2, 3: "And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the Wilderness; and the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, and when we did eat bread to the full. For ye have brought us forth into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

This circumstance clearly shews, that no human provision had been made for the march of such a number of people. The country they had to march through had not been explored, no stations had been fixed upon, and their provision entirely failed in a fortnight. How ill, then, must they have been prepared to march through the whole of that immense desert which lay between them and the land of Canaan, of which they were going to take possession! Indeed, every circumstance in this remarkable history evidently shews, that the plan of this deliverance from Egypt was laid not by man, but by God, who, by his own power, "with a mighty hand," as we read, [*Deut.* xxvi. 8,] "and with an outstretched arm," himself executed it in all its parts. Nothing was due to Moses, or to any other leader, and therefore he

justly replied to the people when they murmured, *Exod.* xvi. 8, "What are we? Your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord."

In this distress the people were relieved, *Exod.* xvi. 13, by the falling of a flight of *quails*, which covered the whole camp, that very evening; and the next morning [*ver.* 14] they found, for the first time, all the country round them covered with a nourishing substance, which they called *manna*, with which they were miraculously supplied ever after, till they came to the borders of the land of Canaan. Though this manna could not usually be kept more than one day, it was remarkable, that when none of it fell on the sabbath day, but a double quantity the day before, it might be kept two days. [*Vers.* 22—24.] Also a pot filled with it, and deposited in the ark, was kept to future generations. *Ver.* 33.

Proceeding farther, to *Rephidim*, the people *murmured* again for want of water, (*Exod.* xvii. 3,) and there God relieved them by a perpetual stream, which issued from a rock, on Moses striking it, by the command of God, with his rod. These difficulties, in which the people found themselves unexpectedly involved, did not lead them to disbelieve the power of God, but only to fear he had deserted them. This place Moses denominated *Meribah*, (*Exod.* xvii. 7,) "because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us, or not?"

After this we have an account of a battle which the people had with the *Amalekites* in which *Joshua* commanded, while *Moses* only prayed for his success. From this it is evident that he was no warrior, and, as other circumstances shew, that he was not possessed of the wisdom and sagacity which are usually ascribed to him; and as he was of a most unambitious disposition, he appears to have been by no means naturally qualified to undertake the conducting of his countrymen in the hazardous enterprise of leaving Egypt, then inhabited by a powerful people, and dispossessing another warlike nation of a country in which they had strongly fortified themselves. What he did was not from any impulse of his own mind, but by supernatural direction and assistance.

The next transaction in the history, on which, for its singular importance, I shall dwell some time, took place "in the third month" after the Israelites had left Egypt, (*Exod.* xix. 1,) at *Mount Sinai*, where we find such evi-

dences of the presence and power of God as had never been exhibited before, and which, in point of grandeur and magnificence, have never been equalled since; and the scene was so circumstanced, that there could not possibly have been any deception, or imposition, in the case. Hitherto the power of God had been abundantly displayed in great *events*. The successive plagues of Egypt, and the passage through the Red Sea, had been evidently effected by divine power; and the result had been such a deliverance of a completely enslaved people, from the power of a wise and warlike nation, as no power or policy of their own could have effected, especially in so short a time, and in their circumstances. But every message, or order, had been delivered to the Israelites, or to *Pharaoh*, by Moses. The Divine Being had, in all the cases, spoken to *him* in the first instance, and he had delivered the message to them. But now every individual Israelite was to hear the voice of God himself.

Hitherto, also, the particular designs of Providence respecting this nation had not been distinctly announced, except in general terms to Abraham; and a promise of freedom from such plagues as those with which the Egyptians had been afflicted, if they would obey the voice of God, had been made to them at Elim. [*Exod.* xv. 26.] But now the great purpose of their deliverance from Egypt, and of every thing else that was to be done in favour of this nation, was to be clearly made known to them, and a regular covenant was to be established between God and them, the effect of which was to continue to the end of time. This purpose of the Divine Being is thus announced to Moses, *Exod.* xix. 3—6:

"And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the *Mount*, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people. For all the earth is mine; and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel."

In consequence of this, Moses assembled the people, and delivered this important message; and, as we read, *Exod.* xix. 8, "all the people answered together, and said, All

that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord."

The transaction having proceeded thus far, the solemn ratification of what God had declared was announced in the following manner, *Exod.* xix. 9: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak *unto* thee, and believe thee for ever." They were themselves to hear the voice of God from the awful appearance of a thick cloud, in order that their faith in the divine mission of their lawgiver, and, consequently, in all the promises of God made by him, might be confirmed beyond the danger of any future doubt. And the extraordinary measure has been attended with the desired effect, the whole Jewish nation having, from that time to the present, never entertained a doubt on the subject.

This extraordinary appearance of God speaking to a whole nation from a thick cloud on the top of *Mount Sinai*, was announced three days before it took place; and their attention was kept up to it by the most solemn preparation that can be imagined; so that if any deception had been intended, they might have been put upon their guard. *Exod.* xix. 10, 11: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow—for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people, upon Mount Sinai." Directions were then given, that no persons whatever, except *Moses* and *Aaron*, should ascend the Mount; and lest any of the people should press too near, bounds were set to prevent them.

After this preparation, the narrative proceeds as follows, *Exod.* xix. 17, 18: "And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the nether part of the Mount, and Mount Sinai was altogether in a smoke; because the Lord descended upon it in fire, and the smoke thereof ascended as in a furnace, and the whole Mount quaked greatly." Here it may be observed, that though smoke might be made upon the Mount by persons previously placed there by Moses, the mountain could not have been made to *quake*, or *shake*, by any human means. Besides, it would have been very easy for the people to have distinguished a *smoke*, made by fire, from the thick *cloud* which enveloped the whole mountain. It may, indeed, be thought suspicious, that the people should not be permitted to ascend the Mount. But, certainly, there was the strictest propriety and decorum in not permitting the bulk of the

people to press too near the place of the Divine presence; and this very circumstance must have rendered the miracle of an audible voice from the top of the mountain more indisputable; since those who heard it were removed to a greater distance.

"And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice." *Exod.* xix. 49. What Moses spake, or what God answered, we are not told. It was probably a solemn invocation on the part of Moses, and the answer, whatever it was, was heard by the whole people. These speeches would serve as a gradual preparation for the great scene that was to follow, and would thereby put it more in the power of any sceptical or inquisitive persons among them to discover the deception, if there had been any in the case.

After this, God called Moses to the top of the Mount, and gave him a farther charge about the behaviour of the people. He then went down, and took his place among them, and after this, in the hearing of all the people, and in a loud, articulate voice, God delivered the ten commandments, preceded by this solemn introduction, "I am the Lord thy God, *who* brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." *Exod.* xx. 2.

The company who heard these words, and the ten commandments which followed them, was much greater than was necessary for ascertaining the fact of distinct articulation: for they must have been more than two millions, and these were not near the place from which the voice issued, so that if speaking-trumpets had been then known, which no person will say is at all probable, it would have been impossible, by any natural means, to have produced such an effect; and though the mere sound of a human voice may be heard to a considerable distance, distinct articulation cannot be perceived very far. And besides this articulate voice, and the sound of a trumpet, there was thunder and lightning, and a cloud enveloping the whole mountain; and though thunder and lightning be a natural *phenomenon*, it was impossible to have foreseen that such an appearance would take place three days before hand; and certainly any thing of this tremendous kind would have interrupted, and disconcerted, any persons who should have been placed on the Mount for the purpose of speaking to the people from thence.

This appearance was so awful, that the people seem to have removed to a considerable distance from the mountain

before they heard any articulate words: for we read, *Exod.* xx. 18, "And all the people saw the thunderings and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoaking; and when the people saw it, they removed," as they naturally would, "and stood afar off." They would probably keep retiring from the mountain during the delivery of the ten commandments, which was probably very slow, so as to take up a considerable time; and this would make the distinct hearing of them much more difficult and extraordinary.

With this clear manifestation of the Divine presence and power, the people were fully satisfied, and no doubt remained upon their minds. Thus impressed, they said unto Moses, *Deut.* v. 24, 25, 27, "Behold the Lord our God hath shewed us his *great glory*, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire. We have seen this day that God *talketh* with man, and he liveth. Now, therefore, why should we die? For this great fire will consume us.—Go thou near, and hear all *the things which the Lord our God saith, and thou shalt speak unto us, whatever the Lord shall say unto thee*, and we will hear it and do it."

In consequence of this, we read, *Exod.* xx. 21, "The people stood afar off, and Moses, *only*, drew near unto the thick darkness where God was;" and from the communications made to him, Moses digested the whole system of the Jewish religion and polity, which is detailed in his writings; and there was then a solemn acceptance of this system, and an express, formal covenant between God and the people of Israel on the occasion, the account of which immediately follows.

Exod. xxiv. 3—8: "And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said, we will do. And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning; and built an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel who offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed peace-offerings, of oxen, unto the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons, and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar, and he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people, and they said, All that the Lord hath said, will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the

blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words."

After this solemn transaction, Moses was again called up to the Mount, and he continued there forty days, in order to receive the particulars of the future constitution, and two tables of stone, containing the ten commandments. While he continued there, "a cloud covered the Mount." (*Exod.* xxiv. 15.) And this cloud, called "the glory of the Lord," [*ver.* 16,] which assumed the appearance of darkness by day and of fire by night, (an appearance which no human art could counterfeit,) covered the Mount *six whole days;* and on "the seventh day" God "called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud," when we read, *Exod.* xxiv. 17, 18, "And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the Mount, in the eyes of the children of Israel, and Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the Mount; and Moses was in the Mount forty days and forty nights;" and when God "had made an end of communing with him," he gave him "two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God." *Exod.* xxxi. 18.

Thus ended this great transaction, the most important to the Israelitish nation, and eventually to the whole world, that ever was recorded. Such was the origin of that system out of which sprung Christianity as a necessary consequence, and a part, and which we Christians, therefore, are equally concerned to maintain, with the Jews themselves. The foundation of our faith in this system rests on the miraculous events which have been recited, and their credibility must be estimated by the circumstances of them, and especially by their effects.

From the circumstances it appears that nothing could have been devised to render these extraordinary facts less liable to objection; and their effects could not have been greater than they were, in securing the firm belief of them in the Jewish nation in every period of their history, even in the times of their greatest delinquency; and what is more, in recovering them from frequent relapses into idolatry, to which they were exceedingly prone, but which never implied any disbelief of the great facts on which the truth of their own religion was founded; and which has settled in as firm a faith as is now to be found in any part of the world, though at the distance of six thousand years from their date; and this, notwithstanding the most discouraging situation possible, the most trying to men's faith and perseve-

rance. For such is the faith of the Jews in the divine mission of Moses, believing in all the promises of their religion, to this day, against every visible ground of hope; and, among no class of people whatever, are there fewer unbelievers. Nominal Christians are numerous, but merely nominal Jews, though there are some, are comparatively very few.

DISCOURSE V.

OF MIRACULOUS EVENTS IN THE TIME OF JOSHUA.

JOSHUA i. 1, 2, 5:

Now after the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spake unto Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses's minister; saying, Moses my servant is dead, now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou and all this people, unto the land which I give unto them, even to the children of Israel.—As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee.

HAVING considered the miraculous events by which the deliverance of the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt, and their passage through the Wilderness, was distinguished, and especially those by which the divine mission of Moses, and the authority of his law, was confirmed, I proceed to direct your attention to those which immediately preceded and accompanied the taking possession of the land of Canaan, as being a part, and a continuation, of the same scheme. Of the remaining events in the life-time of Moses, some indeed were miraculous, but either not being very conspicuously so, or having only a temporary effect, I do not dwell upon them.

I must, however, except one miracle of a peculiar kind, by means of which the priesthood was settled in the family of *Aaron*, so that there was never afterwards any complaint on this subject. After the rebellion of *Korah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*, [*Numb.* xvi. 1—3,] which respected *Aaron* as well as *Moses*, all the congregation complained, as if *they* had been the cause of the death of so many of the people; when God was pleased to punish them by a pestilence, of which

fourteen thousand and seven hundred died, and a stop was put to it by Aaron taking incense, and standing "between the dead and the living." [*Ver.* 48.]

This action, in which Aaron was the instrument, having so instantaneous an effect, sufficiently distinguished him as a priest. But in order to put the matter beyond all possibility of doubt in future, God ordered that the heads of every tribe should deliver to Moses a rod, with their names written upon them, and that on the rod for the tribe of *Levi* the name of *Aaron* should be inscribed. These rods were laid before the ark, with an assurance from God, that the rod belonging to that tribe for whom the priesthood was destined, should be found in blossom on the day following. (*Numb.* xvii. 2—5.) As every tribe was interested in this decision, we cannot doubt but that sufficient precautions were taken that there should be no imposition in the case, though the particulars are not mentioned. The issue is thus recorded [*vers.* 8—10]: "And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses went into the tabernacle of witness, and behold the rod of Aaron, for the house of Levi, was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds. And Moses brought out all the rods from before the Lord, unto all the children of Israel, and they looked, and took every man his rod. And the Lord said unto Moses, bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me."

That there was any trick, or contrivance of Moses, in this case, is improbable on this account, that it was not himself, or his posterity, but Aaron, and his family, that was, in consequence of it, honoured with the priesthood. The children and posterity of Moses ranked no higher than other Levites, without any mark of distinction, or any advantage whatever; and he must have been a man different from all other men, if he had preferred the descendants even of his brother to his own. The sons of Moses are particularly mentioned, as well as those of Aaron; but we are informed of nothing concerning them, besides their names.

The remaining events in the life-time of Moses I shall barely mention. During the forty years that the Israelites abode in the Wilderness, it is probable that they continued in the neighbourhood of the stream which first issued from the rock of *Rephidim*, so that they were sufficiently supplied with water. On their removing northwards to *Kadesh*, the southern border of the land of Canaan, the people were

again distressed for want of water, when they were relieved a second time by a stream from a rock; and on this occasion it was that the improper conduct of Moses and Aaron was the cause of their not being permitted to go over the river Jordan.*

The country of the Edomites lying in their way, they asked leave, but were refused, to pass peaceably through it. They therefore made the whole circuit of their country, and came to the southern border of the Amorites, on the other side of Jordan. But before this, having been attacked by *Arad*, one of the princes of the southern parts of Canaan, they vowed the destruction of his cities; and this was afterwards accomplished by Joshua. After this, Aaron died, and was buried in *Mount Hor*, and was succeeded in the office of high priest by his son Eleazar. [*Numb.* xx. 14—29.]

In this going round all the land of Edom, the people being much distressed, murmured once more, and they were punished for it by fiery serpents; but they were relieved, when, by the particular order of God, they only looked towards a brazen serpent, which had been erected on a pole for that purpose. Thus the hand of God was conspicuous in their relief from this calamity, as well as on every other occasion.†

The Israelites being now come to the borders of the *Amorites*, to the east of the river Jordan, they asked leave to pass peaceably through it; but being refused, and opposed by force, they defeated them, and took possession of their country. After this, Og, king of Bashan, coming in a hostile manner against them, they defeated him also, and taking possession of his country, they became masters of a very large and fertile tract on the other side of Jordan, bordering on the *Moabites* and *Ammonites*, the descendants of Lot. [*Numb.* xxi. 21—35.]

Here *Balak* king of Moab, being jealous of the Israelites, but not choosing to meet them in battle, hired *Balaam* a prophet to pronounce a curse upon them, thinking that this would ensure their destruction. But instead of this God was pleased to compel him to pronounce a blessing.‡

In this transaction the *Midianites* joined the *Moabites;* and the Israelites, continuing some time in their neighbourhood, were tempted to join in one of their religious festivals, in which, as in various acts of the Heathen religion,

* See *Numb.* xx. 2—13, Vol. XI. p. 249.
† See *Numb.* xxi. 4—9, Vol. XI. p. 250
‡ See *Numb.* xxiii. xxiv., Vol. XI. pp. 252—259.

the people indulged themselves in the promiscuous commerce of the sexes: but by the zeal of *Phinehas*, the son of *Eleazar*, a stop was put to this evil. For this insidious attempt of the Midianites to draw the Israelites into idolatry, war was ordered to be made upon them; the consequence of which was, the total defeat of the Midianites, and the plundering, but not the taking possession, of their country. In this battle *Balaam* the prophet also fell, and by the judgment of God every person concerned in any acts of idolatry along with the Midianites, which was the worship of *Baal Peor*, died before they came to the land of Canaan. This Moses particularly observed to them. *Deut.* iv. 3, 4: "Your eyes have seen what the Lord did because of Baal Peor. For all the men that followed Baal Peor, the Lord thy God hath destroyed them from among you; but ye who did cleave unto the Lord your God, are alive, every one of you, this day." *

In the last years of the life of Moses he wrote the book of *Deuteronomy*, consisting of a recapitulation of the great events which have been recited, the most earnest exhortations to the people to continue firm in their allegiance to the true God, foretelling their prosperity in case of obedience, and the dreadful calamities that would overtake them (and they have all actually come to pass) in case of their disobedience; and lastly, in encouraging Joshua, who succeeded him in the general conduct of the people. After this, not being permitted to pass the river Jordan, he was indulged with a sight of the promised land from *Mount Pisgah;* and there, though in full vigour, he died, or was thought so to do. But to me it seems not improbable, that, as he appeared together with *Elijah*, who was translated into heaven without dying, on the mountain on which our Saviour was transfigured, he had been translated also, and is now living together with them. But where they are, or how they are employed, is, no doubt for good reasons, unknown to us.†

Moses being dead, or translated, *Joshua* [*Ch.* i. 2] was appointed to succeed him. That this was by divine appointment is probable, because it does not appear that Joshua had any natural interest that could have recommended him to so important a succession. He was neither of the same tribe with Moses and Aaron, nor of that of Judah, to which, by the prophecy of Jacob, the pre-eminence was promised. Had Moses himself had any choice in the case, and he had had

* See Vol. XI. pp. 259, 260.

† See, on *Deut.* xxxiv. 6, Vol. XI. p. 302.

the spirit of enterprise and ambition that unbelievers must ascribe to him, it would, no doubt, have been in favour of his own family, or at least of his own tribe.

We are now to attend to the miraculous interpositions of Divine Providence in the conduct of the Israelites under Joshua, till their complete settlement in the land of Canaan. And these were sufficiently remarkable, and such as must have convinced the Israelites that nothing of any consequence depended upon, or had been done by, Moses; but that it was the power of God that had been displayed by him, and which was the same at all times.

The effect of the miracles upon the inhabitants of Canaan, which had been performed while the Israelites were under the conduct of Moses, appeared when Joshua sent spies to discover the situation of the country which he was about to invade. For the woman who received these spies, said, (*Josh.* ii. 9, 11,) "I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us; and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt, and what ye did to the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you. For the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath." The extraordinary events here referred to, respected other nations, and were necessarily known to them, but not the transactions at *Mount Sinai*, or the other events on which I have descanted, which were confined to the Israelites themselves, and which were particularly calculated to confirm their faith in the divine mission of Moses, and in the truth and importance of the civil and religious institutions which he communicated to them.

The passage of the Israelites over the river Jordan was as remarkable a transaction as their passage through the Red Sea, and with respect to its credibility, is as little liable to objection; for no natural cause could have made the waters of a river divide, as these did, so as to make a passage for such a number of people, and so long a space of time, and especially when it overflowed its banks, as it did when the Israelites had occasion to cross it, and still does in the time of harvest. Besides, this most wonderful event was announced three days beforehand, as the miracle

at *Mount Sinai* had likewise been, and it was attended with such other peculiar circumstances, as abundantly demonstrates that human power, or contrivance, had nothing to do in the case. It will be interesting and instructive to attend to these particulars.

After Joshua had received his instructions from God, he announced the wonderful event in the following manner, *Josh.* i. 10, 11: "Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare your victuals. For within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God giveth you, to possess it." This order being executed on the day before the event, "Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves, for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you. And Joshua spake unto the priests, saying, Take up the ark of the covenant, and pass over before the people." [*Ch.* iii. 5, 6.]

Things being in this state of readiness, we are informed, [*Josh.* iii. 7,] that "the Lord said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so will I be with thee." After this, Joshua, by divine direction, gave the following very particular orders, announcing every thing that was to take place; and the circumstances and the manner in which every thing was done, shew that there could not have been any thing like human contrivance in the case. A great river was to be crossed, and yet no boats, or bridge, were provided for the purpose. What Joshua said was as follows:

Josh. iii. 9—13: "And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, Come hither, and hear the words of the Lord your God. And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Gergashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites. Behold the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passes before you into Jordan. Now therefore take ye twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, out of every tribe a man. And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest *on the waters of the Jordan*, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above, and they shall stand upon a heap." What perfect confidence does this language shew in the power of

God, and the truth of the divine promise! The narrative then proceeds, and we find that every circumstance answered to the prediction:

"And it came to pass when the people removed from their tents, to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people; and as they that bare the ark *came* into Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all its banks all the time of harvest,) that the waters which came down from above stood, and rose up upon a heap, very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan, and those that came down towards the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off, and the people passed over, right against Jericho. And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan." [*Josh.* iii. 14—17.]

Such was this extraordinary transaction, of which all the people were, of course, witnesses. But besides this, measures were immediately taken to preserve the memory of it to future ages. Twelve stones were taken out of the bed of the river, near the place where the priests had stood during the passing of the people, and were erected on the neighbouring shore.

Of these particulars we have the following narrative, *Josh.* iv. 1—3: "And it came to pass when all the people were clean passed over Jordan, that the Lord spake unto Joshua, saying, Take you twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man, and command you them, saying, Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve stones, and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging-place where ye shall lodge this night." This Joshua did, saying, *vers.* 6, 7, "That this may be a sign among you, that when your children *shall* ask your fathers in time to come, saying, What mean you by these stones? then shall ye answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever."

We then read, [*Josh.* iv. 8—10,] that "the children of Israel did so as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones, out of the midst of Jordan,—according to the number

of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them unto the place where they lodged, and laid them down there. And Joshua set up twelve stones in" (or perhaps rather *out of)* " the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant stood, and they are there unto this day. For the priests which bare the ark stood in the midst of Jordan, until every thing was finished that the Lord commanded Joshua,—and the people hasted and passed over."

This interesting narrative closes in the following manner [*Josh.* iv. 11, 18—24]: " And it came to pass when all the people were clean passed over, that the ark of the Lord passed over, and the priests, in the presence of the people. —And it came to pass when the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord were come up out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up unto the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned into their place, and flowed over all its banks, as they did before. And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, on the east border of Jericho. And these twelve stones which they took out of Jordan did Joshua pitch in Gilgal. And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers, in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? then shall ye let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan before you until you were passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up before us, until we were gone over; that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty, that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever."

You see how naturally and circumstantially this wonderful event is related, which could only be done by an eye-witness; and this is the farthest in the world from being a *traditional* account, such as had passed through many hands before it came to the writer; and the witnesses of the transaction were more than two millions of persons.

The effect of this great event on the inhabitants of Canaan was such as might have been expected; as we find, *Josh.* v. 1: " And it came to pass when all the kings of the Amorites which were on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites which were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of Jordan

from before the children of Israel, until *they* were passed over, that their hearts melted; neither was ther spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel."

During this consternation of their enemies, the Israelites were directed to do what would certainly have been deemed the extreme of madness in any other circumstances, and which tried their faith, in the protection of God, to the utmost. Having neglected the rite of circumcision during their sojourning in the Wilderness, they were, by the express order of God, all circumcised immediately after they had passed the river, and were arrived in the country of their enemies, at whose mercy they thereby evidently were, if they had ventured to attack them;* and this they naturally would have done to prevent their passing the river, had it been made by any natural means. Their conduct, therefore, may be considered as a proof that it was effected in a supernatural manner. The following is the scriptural account of this circumstance:

Josh. v. 2, 8: "At that time the Lord said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel, the second time.—And it came to pass when they had done circumcising all the people, that they abode in their places in the camp till they were whole."

To commemorate this transaction, the place was called *Gilgal*, which signifies *a rolling away*, because, as it is said, God there "rolled away the reproach of Egypt" from the people of Israel. *Josh.* v. 9.†

At this time also, instead of pursuing the advantage they had in the consternation of their enemies, as invaders naturally would have done, "on the fourteenth day of the month," which was four days after the passage of the river, the Israelites had a solemn celebration of the *passover*. And "on the morrow after the passover," we read, that "they did eat of the old corn of the land," and then the miraculous supply of manna wholly ceased. *Josh.* v. 12: "And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land, neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year." This was the beginning of harvest, and they would, of course, reap the fields in the neighbourhood of the camp; and before this they had not found sufficient to supply so great a number as the nation of the Israelites now consisted of.

* See, on *Josh.* v. 7, Vol. XI. p. 306. † See Vol. XI. p. 307.

After these signal and numerous proofs of the presence of God with the Israelites, we may wonder at the obstinacy of the inhabitants of Canaan, in making any opposition to them. But they were apprized that they were to be wholly exterminated, and that submission would avail them nothing. There were instances also of the Israelites having sustained some loss and defeat, as in their encounters with the *Amalekites* and king *Arad*, and therefore they could not tell but that circumstances might again arise, in which they might combat them with success. They did not, however, immediately advance against the Israelites, as the Amalekites and Arad had done; and as they naturally would have done, if they had not been overawed by the miraculous passage of the river, which (as they might learn that the Israelites had provided no boats or bridges) they might think a sufficient bar to their farther progress. But the inhabitants of the first considerable city that lay in their way, viz. *Jericho*, contented themselves with keeping within their walls, which their enemies did not appear to have any means of assailing.

It pleased God, however, to make a signal display of his power, in reducing this strongly-fortified place, without the aid of any human means whatever, and in a manner peculiarly striking and terrific. After the appearance of an angel, who called himself the "captain of the host of the Lord,"* to Joshua, "the Lord said unto him," [*Ch.* vi. 2,] "See I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour;" and the manner in which this was to be effected, so that the Divine power should be as conspicuous as it had been in the destruction of the army of *Pharaoh*, was thus announced to him, *vers.* 3—5: "Ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus *shall ye* do six days. And seven priests shall bear before the ark, seven trumpets of rams' horns;† and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. And it shall come to pass that when they make a long blast with the rams' horns, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him."

What must the people of Jericho have thought during this solemn procession, especially after its continuing so

* *Josh.* v. 14. See, on *ver.* 15, Vol. XI. p. 307. † See, on *ver.* 4, *ibid.*

long a time? All this was transacted with the greatest punctuality; and to render the effect more striking, "Joshua commanded the people," saying, [*Josh.* vi. 10,] "Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice; neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day that I bid you shout; then shall ye shout." Accordingly, when the proper time was come, he said to the people, [*ver.* 16,] "Shout, for the Lord hath given you the city." During this shout, the wall of the city fell, and, as they had been directed, every man went up straight before him; and agreeably to the positive orders they had received on this particular occasion, and which was never after repeated, they destroyed every thing they found in the place, sparing only *Rahab** and her relations. They also [*ver.* 24] "burned the city with fire, and all that was therein; only the silver and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord." They were strictly forbidden to appropriate any thing to their own use, which shews that they were not actuated by the passions of other conquerors. And as they did not indulge their natural disposition of *avarice*, we may well suppose they did not indulge that of *cruelty*, but considered themselves as the mere executioners of the orders of heaven.

Notwithstanding the positive order to destroy every living thing in *Jericho*, making the first-fruits of their conquests a kind of whole burnt-offering to God, who gave it to them, one person was tempted to transgress this order, by taking and hiding some part of the spoil. For this the people suffered a partial defeat in their next attempt, which was upon a town called *Ai*. But the offender was discovered by a solemn lot, conducted under the immediate direction of God; and, as an example of disobedience, he was publicly stoned to death.†

This example would operate to deter any more of the people from disobeying any other divine command. And the conquest of a city so fortified as *Jericho* was, and effected in the extraordinary manner that has been related, could not but strike a terror into all the inhabitants of the country, and impress them with the idea of the superiority of the God of Israel to their own divinities, though they had worshipped them in the most expensive manner, sacrificing to them not only human victims in general, but frequently even their own children.

* See, on *ver.* 5, Vol. XI. p. 307. † See *Josh.* vii. Vol. XI. pp. 308, 309.

I have no occasion to recite any farther particulars of the conquest of Canaan. These events, of which the whole nation of the Israelites were witnesses, and the history of which was committed to writing at the time, must have convinced them that they were under the direction of the God of nature and of the universe; and the well-known effect of this conviction upon that nation, little disposed as they were to believe any thing of the kind, viz. so unfavourable to that propensity to idolatry which affected them no less than all other ancient nations, is sufficient to satisfy any person of reflection, and who attends to the principles of human nature, of the certainty of these events, which imply an actual interposition of Divine Providence in favour of the Israelitish nation, and furnish a proof of the truth of that system of revelation which commenced with the institutions of Moses, and was completed by the mission of Jesus Christ.

Such a firm persuasion in the whole Jewish nation, circumstanced as they are well known to have been, on the supposition that the events above recited never took place, and that the written history of them is not authentic, would be a miracle of a much more extraordinary nature than any of those that are objected to, and a miracle without any reasonable object; for what rational end could have been answered by such a supernatural infatuation (for it could not have been any thing less) as should induce a whole nation firmly to believe all the particulars that I have recited, viz. the account of all the plagues of Egypt, their passing through the Red Sea and the river Jordan, the Divine Being speaking to them from *Mount Sinai*, and this last instance of the miraculous fall of the walls of Jericho, without any human means, and that the books containing the history of these particulars were written and published while the memory of the things recorded in them was recent; when, if the account had been fabulous, it must have been exceedingly easy to have exposed it?

No nation in the world, not even the most credulous, (and the Jews have always been the least so,) could have been imposed upon in so gross a manner. And this was not in one particular, but in many; and those on the largest scale, the farthest in the world from resembling tricks of *legerdemain*, such as may be exhibited before a few persons in a private room. But, for the satisfaction of all mankind in future ages, it was requisite that those miracles, which ushered in the first dispensation of revealed religion, should

be so circumstanced with respect both to number and magnitude, as to be out of the reach of all reasonable objection, though not of mere cavil; and such is actually the case. We may even venture to say, that, had the most sceptical person in the world been asked, what he himself would have wished to have been done in order to satisfy him that the Author of Nature had really interposed in the government of the world, he could not have pitched upon more striking things, as an evidence of it, than the ten plagues of Egypt, the passage of the Red Sea and the river Jordan, the articulate and audible voice from *Mount Sinai*, pronouncing not a few words only, (for in that the hearing might be deceived,) but so many as composed the ten commandments, and lastly, the falling of the walls of Jericho; all of them exhibited in the presence of a whole nation, and some of them even more nations than one.

In order to satisfy distant ages that such things as these really took place, what more could have been demanded than that the history of them should be committed to writing while the facts were recent; that solemn customs should be instituted at the very time for the purpose of commemorating them; that a nation the least disposed to the religion which all this apparatus was provided to establish, should receive the history as genuine, and reluctantly adopt the religion thus enjoined them; and that, notwithstanding their many deviations from it, owing to the seductive nature of the rites of other nations, they should, by their faith in this history, be brought back to the strict observance of it, and continue in it to this day, a period of about four thousand years?

Nothing but a due attention to this remarkable state of things is necessary to ensure the firm belief of the whole, to the most sceptical of mankind. And in due time we cannot doubt but that this due attention will be given to this history, and to that of the propagation of Christianity in conjunction with it; and then all mankind will, of course, become worshippers of the God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, and of Jesus Christ; and this faith cannot but be attended with a great improvement in the moral conduct of men, such as will ensure to them the truest enjoyment of this life, and immortal happiness in the life to come.*

* This *Discourse*, and *Discourses* I. and III. preceding, were reprinted by the *Unitarian Society*, 1799. See *Tracts*, III. *Second Series*, 1805.

DISCOURSE VI.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE EVIDENCE OF THE DIVINE MISSION OF MOSES.

DEUT. iv. 32:

Ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth; and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it.

HAVING considered pretty largely the miracles which accompanied the deliverance of the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt, and their settlement in the land of Canaan, I shall now, in order to diversify these Discourses, make some observations of a more general nature, relating to the evidences of both the *Jewish* and the *Christian* revelations, and also some particulars respecting Moses himself.

In the first place I would observe, that the proper ground of our faith in the two revelations, by *Moses* and by *Christ*, is the evidence of the miraculous events which were exhibited on two peculiarly great occasions, and that much of the credibility of many of the subsequent miracles, as those which occur in the history of the prophets of the *Old Testament*, and of the apostles in the *New*, is derived from them. In any new circumstances of things, they are the *first* extraordinary events that require a peculiarly strong evidence, a degree of evidence proportioned to their extraordinary nature, that is, their want of analogy to preceding events; and such will be found to have accompanied the miracles of Moses, and of Christ, especially that of his resurrection. But these facts being once admitted, a new analogy of facts is established, in consequence of which, events similar to them, as belonging to the same system, will naturally be admitted on less circumstantial evidence. If, for example, we had ourselves seen any person do what was deemed extraordinary, or more than could have been expected of persons in his situation, we should have examined the facts with the greatest rigour: but after being satisfied with respect to their evidence, we should not require so much for

a repetition of the same things, as the performance of others similar to them, either by himself, or by persons connected with him.

If, therefore, any person be satisfied that the miracles exhibited at the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, at *Mount Sinai*, and at their settlement in the land of Canaan, be credible, he will have little difficulty in admitting the truth of other miracles, which occur in the course of the same history, though, separately taken, the evidence of them should appear to be less satisfactory. The same will be the case with respect to the miracles ascribed to *Peter* and *Paul*, after admitting those of *Christ*, because they would be such as would be naturally expected to follow them.

Nay, the easy admission of such miracles on slight evidence is a kind of proof that the evidence of the preceding miracles had been satisfactory, for nothing else could have prepared the minds of men for the easy reception of the subsequent ones. Thus the credulity of Christians, after the age of the apostles, and the many pretended miracles of a later period, which were received without sufficient examination, prove that the minds of men had been predisposed for their easy reception; and this could not have been done without satisfactory evidence of preceding miracles of a similar nature.

In this view, the ready reception of *Mahometanism* itself proves that the minds of men in that part of the world had been prepared for it, by having had satisfactory evidence of some preceding revelations, otherwise they would have rejected *Mahomet's* pretensions, as most preposterous and absurd. The credulity of mankind with respect to him and other impostors, Christians or others, is no proof of the truth of *their* pretensions, but a strong presumption that those of some others, who had preceded them, had been better founded.

In order, therefore, to examine the foundation of any system of religion, we should attend principally to the *original miracles*, from which the credibility of all those that followed was derived, and in this view those of *Moses* have the preference of those of *Christ;* since the miracles of Christ must have appeared more credible in proportion to the credibility of those of a similar preceding dispensation, which he himself received. For a Jew, who, as such, believed the divine mission of Moses, would much more easily admit that of Christ, than a Heathen, who had no previous faith in the divine mission of any person whatever.

And, for this reason, no doubt, it was provided, in the course of Divine Providence, that the Christian religion should be promulgated by means of a series of miracles wholly unaided by those by which the Jewish religion was established, and more open to the examination of the whole world, which it respected. And, as I propose to shew in some future Discourse, the miracles of Christ, being exhibited in a more inquisitive age, and having been subjected to a peculiarly rigorous test, which would ensure it the examination of both friends and enemies, Christianity has advantages with respect to its credibility peculiar to itself, and even superior, in some respects, to that of the miracles of Moses. Let us, however, give the closest attention to both, whether we consider them as connected with each other or not.

I cannot proceed any farther without noticing the extreme absurdity of maintaining what some have done, viz. that the miracles of Christ may be admitted, and those of Moses rejected, as if *Judaism* and *Christianity* had no necessary connexion; whereas, they are, in fact, parts of the same scheme, and imply the truth of each other; or, though the former may not distinctly point to the latter, the latter is evidently built upon the former.

Christ and the *apostles* were *Jews*, and entertained no doubt whatever of the truth of the religion in which they were educated; and can it be supposed that they should have a divine mission themselves, and at the same time be believers in what was a mere imposture, and imagine that what they received from God was built upon that imposture? Such an alliance between truth and falsehood is absolutely incredible. Those who have entertained this strange idea must have given much less attention to the evidence of the divine mission of Moses than to that of those miracles which prove that of Christ's, or they would not have thought so meanly of it.

If *Christianity* has advantages peculiar to itself, with respect to the evidence of its truth, *Judaism* has others peculiar to itself, and no less striking, especially those of an internal nature; for, if we consider the state of the world in the time of Moses, it must appear in the highest degree incredible that he should have attained ideas concerning God and a Providence, so infinitely superior to those that were to be found in any of the neighbouring nations, even the most learned and polished. Where could he have learned the truly sublime and rational idea of one God, and

the purity of his worship, when all other nations were addicted to idolatry, and the most horrid vices in the worship of their several deities? How came the Jewish religion to have nothing in it of *omens*, *auguries*, *charms*, and numberless such superstitious observances as those of which the whole of the religion of the Heathens (not excepting that of the Greeks and Romans) consisted? How came the Jewish religion to come in aid of the purest morality, when that of all their neighbours encouraged alike the grossest sensuality and cruelty? Among them we find the most shocking indecencies committed in the very temples, and among all of them we find human sacrifices. And these were things of which the Jewish lawgiver expressed the greatest abhorrence; and in all other respects the Jews were certainly not more enlightened, or more civilized, than their neighbours. This great difference cannot be accounted for but by supposing that the Jews were *taught of God*, while other nations had been left to their *vain imaginations;* fancying that their affairs were subject to the influence of the sun, moon and stars, and other imaginary causes of good and evil, and having recourse to the most ridiculous rites in order to avert the indignation, and conciliate the favour of those imaginary powers.

With respect to the immediate effect of the miracles of Moses and those of Christ, it is to be observed that the former gained the entire and firm assent of the whole nation of the Israelites, whereas the latter convinced only a part of them. But in the former case there was no previous principle of unbelief operating to counteract their effect. It was nothing but the hopeless state of their affairs that made the Israelites distrust the divine mission of Moses, the first object of which was their deliverance from their bondage in Egypt; but when this was actually effected, in the manner that Moses predicted, and entirely without their concurrence, nothing remained but a joyful acquiescence in what they themselves saw, and could not but see, that God had done for them.

On the other hand, Jesus found the whole nation of the Jews possessed of a firm belief in a temporal deliverer, and the firmest persuasion concerning the truth of their prophecies. It is not much to be wondered at, therefore, that they could not be made to believe, even on the evidence of miracles, that any other than a king could be their promised *Messiah;* so that their faith in Moses and their other prophets

operated to prevent their receiving Jesus in the same character. Their worldly ambition also would tend to confirm them in their prejudices against the pretensions of Jesus.

However, the purposes of God were equally answered by the universal belief of the Jews in the divine mission of Moses, and their partial belief in that of Jesus. In the former case it was necessary that the whole nation should form itself into a peculiar system of government, of which God himself was to be the head; and this could not have been effected without the concurrence of the nation, and, consequently, without their being satisfied with respect to the authority which enjoined that system. But the object of Christianity was not national, having no more respect to the Jews than to other people, and therefore it required of the Jews of that age only such a persuasion of the truth of the facts, especially that of the resurrection of Jesus, as should ensure the general and universal belief of it in future ages, and to the end of the world. And this object could not, as I shall shew, have been attained, if the great body of the Jewish nation, and especially the governing persons in it, had immediately become Christians.

The *Jewish* and *Christian* dispensations were similar to each other with respect to the test that their evidences were put to, in consequence of the opposition that was made to them. No facts, as I shall shew, were ever subjected to so rigorous a scrutiny as those on which the divine mission of Jesus rested, by means of the umbrage that was taken at it by all the powers of the world, in the age in which it was promulgated, and the consequent persecution of his followers. The divine mission and authority of Moses were also tried in a very rigorous manner by the opposition that was made to him, and nothing could have overcome that opposition but the most overbearing evidence that God was with him.

Moses having tarried on *Mount Sinai* forty days, when the people had no expectation of any such thing, and they knew that he had no sustenance, concluded, (and not very unnaturally,) that they should see no more of him. *Exod.* xxxii. 1: "And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the Mount, *they* gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us out of the land of Egypt, we *know* not what is become of him." They had no doubt of the reality of what

they had seen, in proof of their having been hitherto conducted by God and Moses, but they hastily concluded, as they had done before, that they were deserted, and, therefore, thought that they must do the best they could for themselves.* And having no system of worship as yet established, and thinking, with all other people, that nothing was to be done without one, they reverted to such rites as they had been used to, but still in honour, as they thought, of their own God; for when *Aaron* complied with their wishes, and made *the golden calf*, in direct violation, no doubt, of the second commandment, (but which had not then been committed to writing, or particularly explained to them,) he made proclamation, and said, *To-morrow is a feast to Jehovah.*†

No sooner, however, did Moses make his appearance than the whole business ceased, and by his order the Levites alone went through the camp, and, without meeting with any opposition, made an indiscriminate slaughter of three thousand men. Could this have taken place by the order of a single man, if the people had not had the fullest persuasion from what had passed that he was commissioned by God, and that all resistance would have been vain?‡

On this occasion Moses had an opportunity of shewing his unambitious nature, and the piety and generosity of his sentiments; for when, in order to try him, God proposed to destroy the Israelites, and to make of him "a great nation," *Exod.* xxxii. 10, he interceded for the people in the following truly noble manner: [*vers.* 11—13:] "And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people *whom* thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt, with great power and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce *anger*, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever." Thus ended this remarkable transaction, disgraceful, indeed, to the Israelites, but highly favourable to the evi-

* See Vol. XI. p. 181. † See, on *Exod.* xxxii. 4, 5, *ibid.* p. 182.
‡ See, on *vers.* 25—29, *ibid.* pp. 183, 184.

dence of the divine mission of Moses, and the truth of their religion.

If there had been any *secret* in the miracles of *Moses*, it must have been known to *Aaron*, who was always employed as the instrument of them, by waving his rod, as the signal when they were to take place; and this secret would probably have been discovered when he and their sister *Miriam* complained of the superiority which he assumed over them, though he was the younger brother, and had married a stranger, which, in their opinion, degraded him. *Numb.* xii. 1, 2: "And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses, because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married.—And they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses, and hath he not spoken also by us?" * This discontent, however, implied no doubt of the Divine interposition in favour of the nation, but only a dissatisfaction at the pre-eminence of Moses, as the chief instrument of it. However, notwithstanding the disadvantages of Moses in the respects above-mentioned, and his own unambitious nature, the contest was soon decided in his favour by the interposition of God himself, and both Aaron and all the people were satisfied.

At the report of the spies who were sent to explore the land of Canaan, all the people were disheartened, and ready to go back to Egypt. But Moses, so far from doing any thing to soothe and pacify them, assured them that, on account of this distrust of the power and promise of God, they would be detained forty years in the Wilderness, and that not one of them who had murmured would be permitted to see the promised land. This reproach instigated them to make a rash attempt to enter the country, but when that proved unsuccessful, as Moses had foretold, they were far from executing their purpose of returning into Egypt; and being fully satisfied with respect to the divine power that accompanied Moses, and which had conducted them hitherto, they submitted to this hard sentence, obeyed his orders as before, and continued to live a wandering life in the Wilderness, the whole of the forty years, without making any more attempts, either to return to Egypt or to invade Canaan prematurely. What greater proof can be required of this refractory people being convinced that God was with Moses, and that by him he conducted them?

The rebellion of *Korah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*, by far the

* See Vol. XI. p. 237.

most formidable that Moses ever encountered, implied no dissatisfaction with respect to their being guided by the hand of God, but only with the pre-eminence of *Moses* and *Aaron;* for we read, *Numb.* xvi. 3, "And they gathered themselves together against Moses, and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Wherefore then lift ye yourselves up above the congregation of the Lord?" This rebellion, however, was soon terminated in the most awful manner, the earth opening and swallowing up these complainers with every thing belonging to them, as was previously announced by Moses, and we hear no more complaints of the kind. The measure may appear harsh, but it was necessary that the authority of Moses should be thoroughly established.

It is not necessary for me to vindicate the conduct of God with respect to the Israelites, or to the world at large, though I shall hereafter make some observations on this subject, my principal object in this Discourse being to illustrate the proof of his actual interposition; and certainly there cannot be any clearer evidence of it than the opening of the earth at the word of a man.

But we may be satisfied that whatever the Author of nature does, it will appear to be ultimately right, however it may appear to us at present. It is in the hand of the same Being who conducted the Israelites that we ourselves, and all our concerns, necessarily are. It is, therefore, our business to accommodate ourselves to his will, and acquiesce in his proceedings, unless we think that we can better our condition by complaining.

Among other internal evidences of the fidelity and truth of the Mosaic history, is the excellent character, which, from an attention to the narrative only, we cannot help forming of Moses. That encomium upon him, *Numb.* xii. 3, "Now the man Moses was very meek,* above all the men that were upon the face of the earth," was evidently the remark of some other person, afterwards inserted in the text; having no proper connexion with any thing that goes before, or that follows it.† But we every where see the greatest piety, the strongest affection for the people at the head of whom he was unwillingly placed, and whose perverseness was almost intolerable, and what is more, as

* See a different sense proposed by *Kennicott*, Vol. XI. p. 237, *Note* †.
† See, on *ver.* 3, *ibid.* p. 237.

simple an account of his own failings, as of those of the people, without any attempt to palliate them.

Of this we have a most remarkable instance in his impatience, to say the least, in striking the rock,* at the second time of producing water in this way, and in his acquiescence in the punishment of his offence, which was nothing less than his not being permitted to see his countrymen settled in the promised land, though it is evident, from his earnest prayer afterwards, that it was the first wish of his heart so to do.

From what conceivable motive could an impostor have invented such a story as this? Also, if the people had been at his disposal, what reason could he have had for detaining them so long in the Wilderness? With the greatest ease they had taken possession of all the country to the west of the river Jordan; and to all appearance they were as well prepared to pass the river immediately after, while the terror of their arms was fresh in the minds of the people of Canaan, as at any time afterwards; and Moses, though in years, was in his full vigour. Nay, to all appearance, the people were as well prepared for this important expedition presently after their departure from Egypt, and especially after their passage of the Red Sea, as at any time afterwards; and the history of their attempt at *Kadesh* shews that they had as much spirit for the enterprise. But their impetuosity was restrained till, according to all natural probability, their spirits would be broken, they would have acquired the tame life of the wandering *Arabs*, and have been utterly unable to contend with a people who lived in fenced cities, and who, being apprized of the enterprise, would have had abundant time for taking their measures to repel the invasion. Desirous as the people, and, no doubt, Moses himself must have been, to take possession of the country for the sake of which they had left Egypt, what could have restrained them so long, but the best-grounded persuasion of a divine command for that purpose? Admitting this, the whole history is perfectly natural, and certainly most instructive; but on any other supposition the most unnatural that ever was written.

To an attentive reader there needs no other evidence of the authenticity of the books of Moses than the manner in which they are written, especially his most earnest and affectionate address to the people before his death, con-

* *Twice.* See, on *Numb.* xx. 10—12, Vol. XI. p. 249.

tained in the book of *Deuteronomy*, in which he constantly appeals to the people with respect to what themselves had seen and heard, and makes the most natural observations upon it. I should think it barely possible for any person to read only that book through with attention, and remain an unbeliever in the great events alluded to in it, and related more at length in the preceding books. There is no where extant, since the art of writing was known, and since the art has been most improved, a mode of address more expressive of genuine and excellent sentiments than what we find in this, the oldest of all writers. With this view, and for the sake of the valuable instruction which it affords, I shall subjoin to this Discourse a considerable part of the fourth *chapter*, and also some other passages relating to the blessings which would attend their obedience, and the curses which would follow their disobedience.*

Before I close this subject it may not be improper to make an observation or two on the conduct of the Divine Being in these transactions, in order to give what satisfaction I may be able, to those who find a difficulty with respect to the propriety and justice of some parts of it.

We are told in our translation, that the Israelites were directed by God himself to *borrow* of the Egyptians, *vessels of silver*, *vessels of gold*, and other valuable things, before their departure, when there was no design to restore the things borrowed; and, therefore, that he authorized a fraudulent transaction. But in the original it is simply, they *asked*, or perhaps *demanded*, of the Egyptians the things that they took, which does not imply any intention of returning them; and if the quantity and value were very great, as they probably were, the Egyptians could not be easily made to believe that they wanted them all for the purpose of sacrificing, which was the original pretence for asking leave to go out of the country. In the terror the Egyptians were now in, fearing, as we read, *lest they should all be dead men*, they seem to have wished to get rid of them at any rate, and to have been willing to give them any thing that they demanded as a present at their departure, which, it is to be observed, is agreeable to the oriental customs. And certainly after, at least, a hundred years of hard servitude, it cannot be supposed that they got in this way more than they were fairly entitled to; so that there was no real injustice in the case, and there is no objection

* See these passages in the *Appendix*.

except in the manner in which they took what really belonged to them.*

Again, it is said to be unreasonable for God to *harden the heart of Pharaoh*, as he is said to have done, in order to give occasion for the extraordinary displays of miracles of which I have given an account. He is even said to have raised him up for this very purpose; but this is nothing more than the usual phraseology of scripture, according to which every thing is immediately ascribed to God that takes place in the general plan of Providence, of which he is, in a proper sense, indeed, but only ultimately, the Author.†

Thus, when *David* heard *Shimei* curse him, he said, "Let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him." Not that Shimei had received any order from God to curse David, or that David thought so when he made use of the language, but that it was righteous in God to permit him so to do.‡ So also Joseph said that *God had sent him into Egypt*, when he well knew that he was sent thither by the wicked devices of his brethren. But his going thither was an event of which Providence, as it were, availed itself for the best of purposes.§

The same was the case with respect to *Pharaoh*. He was naturally, as we say, an obstinate man, and long persisted in his resolution to detain the Israelites in subjection to him; and the Divine Being made use of this disposition of his to give such a manifest display of his power as answered the most important purposes in that age, and to the present time. And we have instances in history, and in common life, of obstinacy equal to that of Pharaoh. That of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, in our Saviour's time, was not short of it, and equally subservient to the designs of Providence.

That there was nothing supernatural in the hardening of the heart of Pharaoh, but that his conduct arose from his own natural and blamable obstinacy, and that his case was thus generally understood, appears from what the Philistines say to one another when they were consulting about sending back the ark of God, which had been taken, when, instead of furnishing them with a permanent cause of triumph, they found themselves grievously incommoded by it. 1 *Sam.* vi. 6: "Wherefore, then, do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When

* See, on *Exod.* xi. 2, 3, xii. 33, Vol. XI. pp. 138, 139, 142.
† See, on *Exod.* vii. 3, *supra*, p. 95, Vol. XI. p. 132.
‡ See, on 2 *Sam.* xv. 10, *ibid.* p. 403.
§ See, on *Gen.* xlv. 8, *ibid.* pp. 113, 114.

he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed?"*

I would farther observe with respect to these objections, and also to that from the destruction of the *Canaanites*, and other violations of the common rules of moral conduct among men, that what we call *evil*, natural and moral, is continually employed, in the course of Divine Providence, as the means of producing *good*, and that there can be no just objection to this in the conduct of any being, provided all the consequences of things could be foreseen and attended to, as they are by the Supreme Being. The reason why our choice of means to gain the same good end is limited by the usual rules of morality, is the imperfection of our knowledge. On this account, the rule of our conduct is in many cases different from that of God's. We must not *do evil that good may come*, because we cannot be sure that good *will* come of it. But in this foresight, as well as in every thing else, God is infallible; he *sees the end from the beginning*, and, therefore, in his conduct the introduction of partial evil may have the best effect.

We are not to expect that the Author of revelation should be any other being than the Author of nature, or that he should conduct himself by any other rules. And he who often destroys whole cities and countries by means of earthquakes, and other natural causes, might choose to effect the destruction of the Canaanites by the sword of the children of Israel; and there was this obvious reason for it, that by expressly commissioning them to effect this extirpation, he signified in the least equivocal manner his displeasure at the conduct of the inhabitants of this country, for their abominable, idolatrous practices, as a warning to the Israelites, who were to be a people devoted to his sole worship, for the instruction of all mankind.

Lastly, though the history of the deliverance of the Israelites from their state of bondage in Egypt, and their settlement in the land of Canaan, be an extraordinary one, abounding with miraculous events, which require a proportionably clear evidence, we have seen that the evidence of the facts is as full and clear as the case, or as any case, can require; and the object of the whole scheme to which these events were an introduction, was of proportional importance. It was nothing less than to impress upon mankind the belief of the existence and providence of the one true God,

* See Vol. XI. p. 362.

the purity of his worship, the knowledge of our moral duty in this life, and of our expectations in another. For this great purpose it pleased God to make one nation the medium of all his communications with mankind, and to distinguish them by a particular providence, that they might appear in the most conspicuous light to the whole world, and attract universal attention. This the nation of the Jews has done to a considerable degree in all ages. Originally they were situated in the very centre of all the civilized nations of the world, and as civilization extended, they by one means or another became most wonderfully dispersed through all countries; and at this day they are almost literally every where the most conspicuous, and, in the eye of reason and religion, the most respectable nation on the face of the earth,

It has been by means of prophets of this nation, and especially Jesus Christ, that the world has been recovered, as far as this recovery has taken place, from the deplorable state of superstition and idolatry into which it was universally sunk. This nation had originally as much to learn concerning God, a providence, and a future state, as any other, and they had not naturally any better sources of information; but having been *taught of God*, they or their disciples are the instructors of all the world; and the lessons they give us are equally instructive, whether they themselves have suffered for their disobedience, or flourished in consequence of their obedience. And the most important and convincing of all the lessons they are destined to give the world, what we have reason to believe will put an end to all infidelity, will be the result of their promised restoration to their present desolated country, from their present miserable, despised, and dispersed condition; for who but he who alone can see into futurity, could foresee an event so distant and so complicated? And as their dispersion and preservation correspond, as I shall shew in a future Discourse, with such wonderful exactness to ancient prophecies, there is no reasonable cause of doubt but that their restoration and future flourishing state will correspond to the many predictions concerning it, with equal exactness. With those who, for want of attention, (for it cannot be owing to any thing else,) are unbelievers at present, the issue of the whole must rest on this future event, which cannot fail to arrest and most forcibly engage the attention of all mankind.

DISCOURSE VII.

OF THE

Miraculous Events

FROM THE TIME OF JOSHUA TO THE BABYLONISH CAPTIVITY.

PSALM lxxviii. 5—7:

He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children, that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise, and declare them to their children, that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.

IN the preceding Discourses I laid before you the evidence of the divine mission of Moses, and the credibility of the miraculous events which accompanied the deliverance of the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt, and their settlement in the land of Canaan. These miracles were strictly connected with the promulgation of a system of religion essentially different from any that prevailed in the world at that time, and infinitely superior to them all; consisting in the worship of the one true God, the maker of heaven and earth, and the supreme disposer of all events; a religion which admitted into its rites nothing impure or cruel, and which was eminently subservient to the practice of moral virtue. It was a religion free from the absurd, but then universally prevalent arts of divination, magic, and necromancy; but which supplied the people from time to time with real prophets, who announced to them the will of God, and occasionally foretold things to come.

By this means the Israelites were for ever prevented from wholly abandoning their religion, though deceived by the same fallacious appearances which led the rest of the world into the worship of a multiplicity of deities, and, fascinated by the licentious rites of their religions, the majority of the nation frequently conformed to the worship of their Heathen neighbours. It by no means appears that the

nation in general ever disbelieved the miraculous events recorded in the books of Moses, or the supreme divinity of the God of their fathers; but they were willing to think that, consistently with this, they might be indulged in the worship of inferior deities, and derive both pleasure and advantage from the rites to which all the great nations around them were addicted. After any general or long-continued neglect of their religion, they were, in a course of an extraordinary providence, brought back to it by severe judgments. But the same influence which deceived the rest of the world, in time affected them as before, till the long captivity in Babylon, and what they had an opportunity of observing there, effectually cured them of all proneness to idolatry.

Some think these relapses of the Israelites into idolatry, after the many miracles to which their ancestors had been witnesses, absolutely incredible. But it should be considered that this defection to idolatry, to which they had been addicted in Egypt, did not take place till after the death of Joshua and his contemporaries, that is, while the miraculous events were recent; and that the Israelites did not, in general, do more than join the worship of other gods to that of their own. Also, whatever they might have been taught by Moses, or independently of him, concerning a future state, the proper object of his institutions was temporal prosperity; and they saw other nations flourishing, notwithstanding their idolatry. They might, therefore, cherish the hope that prosperity was not necessarily connected with the observance of their peculiar institutions, especially as their calamity did not follow their defection very speedily, but by slow degrees.

Do not many Christians think and act much in the same manner? How many real believers in Christianity indulge themselves in practices which they know to be forbidden by it, either with the secret hope of after-repentance, or willing to think that their favourite indulgences are not absolutely forbidden, or with some other excuse for them? How many unbelievers do things which they know to be contrary to that *reason* which they put in the place of *religion?* Let not those persons, then, greatly condemn the Israelites, or conclude their conduct to be absolutely unaccountable, and their history, for this reason, incredible.

These frequent relapses into idolatry, notwithstanding the calamities they never failed to bring upon the Israelitish nation, is a clear proof that they had no natural attachment

to the religion instituted by Moses. Though so excellent, it was by no means the religion of their choice, but one that was forced upon them, by evidence which it was not in their power to resist. For what hindered their continuing to worship the gods of their neighbours, to which they were so very prone, as all other nations did, but some particular providence, accompanied with miraculous appearances peculiar to themselves? This is a consideration of the greatest importance to the credibility of the miraculous part of their history; as, in fact, the miracles were constantly exhibited, not before friends, but enemies, that is, persons prejudiced against the object of them.

The history of the Israelites shews that this nation was never long without some miraculous appearances, all of which were, no doubt, directly or indirectly, calculated to confirm them in the belief of the truth and divine origin of their religion. But the first miracle that occurs, which was more particularly calculated to demonstrate the superiority of their god to those of their neighbours, was the fall of the statue of *Dagon* before the ark, and the judgments that befel the Philistines who took it.

This very warlike and powerful nation had been permitted to harass and oppress the Israelites, and these being defeated in battle, and recollecting the wonders wrought in their favour when the ark was in their camp, (as when the river *Jordan* was divided before the priests who carried it, and when the walls of *Jericho* fell down at its presence,) presumptuously, and without any divine direction, fetched the ark into their camp. "Let us," say they, 1 *Sam.* iv. 3, "fetch the ark of the covenant of *Jehovah* out of Shiloh, unto us, that when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies." When they had done so, they felt themselves full of confidence, so that it is said [*ver.* 5] "they shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again."

The Philistines were no strangers to the history of the Israelites,* and, like all other ancient nations, ascribing their success to the superior power of their gods, were greatly alarmed at this event; for we read, *ver.* 7, "And the Philistines were afraid; for they said, God is come into the camp.—Woe unto us, for there hath not been such a thing heretofore. Woe unto us; who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods that

* See, on 1 *Sam.* iv. 8, Vol. XI. p. 359.

smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the Wilderness." However, recovering from their consternation, and exerting themselves in the battle, they gained the victory, and took the ark itself.

This was, no doubt, a cause of great exultation to the Philistines, who, considering it as a triumph of their god *Dagon* over the God of the Israelites, carried the ark into his temple. But their triumph was not of long continuance; for, as we read, 1 *Sam.* v. 3, *Rising early in the morning, they found Dagon laid on his face before the ark.* This must have been performed by miracle, as the image was not broken as it would have been by a natural fall, from being unequally poised, and the foundation by any accident giving way, unless the image had been of wood, in which case the next event must have been miraculous.*

The Philistines, not wholly disconcerted by this disaster, and willing, no doubt, to attribute it to some accident, though they might not be able satisfactorily to account for it, set the image in his place again. But early the next morning they found something more disastrous still; for "the head of Dagon, and both the palms of his hands, were cut off upon the threshold," to which it is probable they must have been carried from some distance; for it is most likely that, as in other Heathen temples, the image would be placed opposite to the door, in the most remote part of the building. It is added, that "only the stump of Dagon was left to him," so that *this* could not have been a fall of the image, but a violent separation of its parts, and, therefore, unquestionably miraculous.†

Alarmed at this second disaster, the Philistines do not appear to have made any attempt to repair or replace the image, and perhaps removed the ark from the temple. But the Divine interposition did not end here. The people of *Ashdod*, who had the custody of the ark, were universally visited with a sore plague of *emerods*, while the rest of the nation were free from it; and ascribing this to the presence of the ark, it was, by common consent, removed to *Gath*. The people of Gath being afflicted with the same plague, they sent it to *Ekron*; but the inhabitants of this city were so terrified at its approach, that they sent and assembled all the lords of the Philistines, and by them it was agreed to send it back, lest, as they said, "it slay us and our people;

* See Vol. XI. pp. 360, 361.
† See, on 1 *Sam.* v. 4, 5, *ibid.* p. 361.

for," it is added, "there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there, and the men that died not, were smitten with the emerods, and the cry of the city went up to heaven."*

The whole nation being now thoroughly alarmed, they agreed to send away the ark without any farther delay, and with presents, to appease the anger of the god to whom it was sacred. "Wherefore," said they, 1 *Sam.* vi. 6, "do ye harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When he wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go?"† But, to ascertain whether what had befallen them was owing to a real miracle, or not, they agreed to place the ark upon a cart, and that it should be drawn by milch cows, whose calves were left at home, which it was well known the cows would not naturally leave. "See," say they, *ver.* 9, "if it go up by the way of his own coast, to Bethshemesh, then he *(Jehovah)* hath done us this great evil; but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote us; it was a chance that happened to us." Accordingly, as we read, [*ver.* 10,] they "did so, and took two milch kine, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home." The event must have satisfied them that what they had suffered was no chance, but the judgment of a superior power: for, as we read, *ver.* 12, "The kine took the straight way, the way to Bethshemesh, and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left, and the lords of the Philistines went after them, unto the border of Bethshemesh."‡

It may be said, that this story is written by *Hebrews*, and, therefore, of suspicious authenticity. But the taking of the ark, or the not taking of it, by their enemies, must have been a thing of such notoriety and importance, that no historian would have ventured to record what was known to be untrue with respect to it. A fiction so extravagant as this, could never have gained credit, and least of all with a people not naturally prejudiced in favour of their religion, but always inclined to that of their neighbours. And if the ark *was* taken by the Philistines, the return of it was a sufficient proof of its being in consequence of a miracle; for nothing could have induced the Philistines voluntarily to give up such a trophy of their victory, so clear a monu-

* See, on 1 *Sam.* v. 8—12, Vol. XI. p. 362. † See *ibid.*
‡ See *ibid.* pp. 362, 363.

ment, as they would consider it, of the superiority of their gods to the God of their enemies.

Besides, the subsequent history of the Israelites is a proof of the authenticity of this event. For after this we do not, of a long time, read of any relapse into idolatry; and the observance of their own religion was thoroughly established in the succeeding times of *David* and *Solomon*, during which the country enjoyed a distinguished state of prosperity and glory.

By the folly and obstinacy of *Rehoboam*,* the ten tribes revolted from the house of David. And it was the policy of *Jeroboam*, whom they made their king, in order to prevent his subjects from returning to the house of David, to provide a different mode and place of worship for them; but still the difference was only in mode and form, and not with respect to its object; for it was the worship of Jehovah by the images of calves, to which they had been accustomed in Egypt, where Jeroboam himself had resided during his banishment from his own country in the reign of Solomon. These calves he set up at Dan, in the northern part of the country, and at Bethel in the southern.†

The posterity of Jeroboam was cut off in the fourth generation, according to an express prophecy delivered to him. *Baasha*, who succeeded them, trod in his steps, notwithstanding the same sentence passed upon him, and which was executed by *Zimri*, who was dethroned by *Omri*. *Ahab*, the son of Omri, who married *Jezebel*, a daughter of the idolatrous king of *Tyre*, went beyond all his predecessors in idolatry and wickedness. For we read, 1 *Kings* xvi. 31, 33, "As if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, he took to wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.—And Ahab made a grove, and *he* did more to provoke Jehovah, the God of Israel, to anger, than all the kings of Israel that were before him."‡ This was the introduction of the worship of *another god*, with rites of a peculiarly horrid nature.

In this reign, at a time of general apostacy, appeared the famous prophet *Elijah the Tishbite*, who opened his commission with denouncing the judgments of God upon the country, in a drought of three years' continuance, followed,

* See, on 1 *Kings* xii. 13—16, Vol. XI. p. 433.
† See, on 1 *Kings* xii. 27—29, *ibid.* pp. 434, 435.
‡ See, on *ver.* 33, *ibid.* p. 440.

of course, by a dreadful famine.* In the last period of this great judgment, *Elijah* met *Ahab*, who accosted him by saying, 1 *Kings* xviii. 17, "Art thou he who troubleth Israel?" The prophet answered, "I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandment of *Jehovah*, and thou hast followed Baalim."

After this, the prophet made the following fair proposal, in order to determine which of the two, *Jehovah* or *Baal*, was the true God, 1 *Kings* xviii. 21: "Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." The people being silent, the prophet proceeded as follows: "I, even I only, remain a prophet of *Jehovah*, but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them, therefore, give us two bullocks, and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under; and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under; *then* call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of *Jehovah;* and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God."

To this the people agreed, 1 *Kings* xviii. 24: "And all the people answered, and said, It is well spoken."† By this time the long drought and famine must have led the people to suspect the power of the new god, whose worship they had adopted. They were therefore the better disposed to listen to the proposal of *Elijah*. And as the miracle which followed was particularly calculated to establish the truth of the religion of the *Hebrews*, as delivered by Moses, in a time of general apostacy from it, so that it is of more importance than any of the miracles subsequent to the time of Moses, I shall dwell the longer on the circumstances of it.

The priests of *Baal* having nothing to object to the fair proposal of *Elijah*, "took the bullock" which they had chosen, "and then dressed it;" and having placed it on the wood, they "called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered." (1 *Kings* xviii. 26.) This continued till the time of evening sacrifice, these priests having

* See, on 1 *Kings* xvii. 1, xviii. 17, Vol. XI. pp. 440, 442.
† See *ibid.* p. 442.

recourse to all their usual modes of invocation, one of which was to "cut themselves with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out," while *Elijah*, confident of his success, mocked them, saying, *ver.* 27, "Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked."*

The priests of *Baal* having tried all their arts to no purpose, *Elijah's* turn came; and by way of preparation, he repaired an old altar, building it of twelve stones, and making a trench all round it; and when he had placed the sacrifice on the wood, in order to make the miracle as unexceptionable as possible, he bade the people fill the trench with water, and to drench both the sacrifice and the wood with it. This was done even three times, till, as we read, "the water ran round about the altar, and he filled the trench also with water."

When this was done, and the time of the evening sacrifice approached, Elijah made the following prayer, *vers.* 36, 37: "*Jehovah*, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O *Jehovah*, hear me, that this thy people may know that thou, *Jehovah*, *art God*, and that thou hast turned their heart back again."

Having pronounced this prayer in the hearing of all the people, the purport of it was fully accomplished. For, as we read, *ver.* 38, "Then the fire of *Jehovah* fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the *very* stones, and *dried* up the water that was in the trench."

Nothing now remained to complete the conviction of all the people, who were spectators of so great and evident a miracle. [*Ver.* 39.] "And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces, and they said, *Jehovah* he is God, *Jehovah* he is God!" And being satisfied with respect to this great article, they could not refuse complying with the express order of God by Moses, which was to put to death those priests of *Baal* who had seduced them to their apostacy from their own God; for thus the history proceeds: "And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal, let not one of them escape; and they took them, and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them

* See, on *vers.* 26—28, Vol. XI. p. 442.

there."* Immediately upon this, an end was put to the long and destructive drought, the rain coming in torrents.

After this we read no more of *Ahab* worshipping *Baal*, though, at the instigation of his wife, he had the wickedness to contrive the murder ef *Naboth*, in order to get possession of his vineyard; and in consequence he was, according to the prediction of a prophet, slain in battle, the dogs licking his blood in the very place where that of Naboth had been shed.

His son *Jehoram*, as we read, 2 *Kings* iii. 2, 3, "Wrought evil in the sight of the Lord, but not like his father and like his mother; for he put away the image of Baal which his father had made. Nevertheless he *clave* unto the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat," and "departed not therefrom." *Jehu* also, who destroyed all the posterity of *Ahab*, agreeably to a prediction to that purpose, and who put to death the priests of *Baal*, adhered to the worship of *Jeroboam's* calves, 2 *Kings* x. 29. This, too, was the case with all the remaining kings of Israel. We read no more of any public encouragement given to the worship of *Baal*, though it must have been practised by many individuals, or there could not have been found so many priests of *Baal* as were put to death by *Jehu*, after the slaughter of them by *Elijah*. And when the reasons are given for God's forsaking that nation, and giving them up to be conquered, and carried into captivity by the kings of Assyria, it is said, 2 *Kings* xvii. 16—18, "They left all the commandments of *Jehovah* their God, and made them molten images, even two calves; and they made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal; and they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divinations and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of *Jehovah*, to provoke him to anger. Therefore was *Jehovah* very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight."

We see, however, the evidence of this great miracle of *Elijah* in the effects which it produced, as it seems to have put a stop to the more public worship of *Baal*, to which the prince and the people had been long addicted, and to have established the belief of the superiority of Jehovah, the God of Israel. And, indeed, nothing could have been better calculated to answer the purpose.

* See, on *ver.* 40, Vol. XI. p. 443.

This miracle was performed in public, due notice was given beforehand, and it was in the presence of enemies; the prophet of Jehovah being but *one*, and the priests of Baal *four hundred and fifty* men, the prince, and, consequently, all the great men in the nation, favouring them. Unprotected as *Elijah* was, it might have been in their power to impose upon him, as by privately introducing fire to consume the sacrifice, but it could not have been in his power to impose upon them. To cut off all suspicion of the kind, he made it as difficult as possible for the fire to have any effect on the sacrifice. The priests of *Baal* had all the time that they could wish for, having been employed from morning till the time of evening sacrifice. But on the prayer of Elijah, in the very unfavourable circumstances that have been described, the fire took place in an instant, and not only were the wood and the sacrifice consumed, but even the water in the trench that had been made round it, dissipated, and the stones themselves consumed, probably *calcined*, which is the greatest effect of fire upon stone. Consequently, it could not be denied that Jehovah appeared to be the God of Nature, the sole author and controuler of its laws.

There is another event in the subsequent part of the reign of *Ahab*, well calculated to confirm him and the people of Irael in the worship of Jehovah, as the God of universal nature. The *Syrians*, having been defeated by the *Israelites* in a battle fought in the hill country, imagined, as we read 1 *Kings* xx. 23, that the *gods* of Israel were "gods of the hills. Therefore," said they, "they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they."* On this, as we read *ver.* 28, "there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith *Jehovah;* Because the Syrians have said that *Jehovah* is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am *Jehovah.*" Accordingly we read, that, though the army of the Israelites were "like two little flocks of kids," while that of "the Syrians filled the country," [*ver.* 27,] when the battle was fought in the plain, the Israelites "slew of the Syrians a hundred thousand footmen in one day."†

Having given this general view of the most important of the miraculous events that occur in the history of the kingdom of *Israel*, I shall consider those that occur in the history

* See Vol. XI. p. 445.

† *Verse* 29. See Vol. XI. p. 446.

of *Judah*, which are no less remarkable, and equally calculated to confirm the people in their attachment to their religion, notwithstanding their proneness to idolatry.

The kingdom of *Judah* had many excellent and pious princes, strict observers of the laws of Moses, but several of them apostatized to the idolatrous customs of the neighbouring nations. It is remarkable that even *Solomon*, who built the Temple, and to whom God had appeared twice, from complaisance to his wives of foreign nations, not only permitted them to introduce the worship of the gods of their respective countries, but himself, at least, occasionally joined them in it. His son *Rehoboam* did the same, and no doubt encouraged the common people to do it. Indeed, such examples were sufficient, without any positive precept. In this reign, as we read, 1 *Kings* xiv. 22—24, the people "did evil in the sight of the Lord, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins, which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done. For they also built them high places, and images, and groves on every high hill, and under every green tree, and there were Sodomites also in the land." For, even this unnatural vice was a rite in some of the Heathen religions, especially in *Egypt*, where it was imagined that the regular rise of the *Nile* (on which the fertility of Egypt depends) was connected with that abominable practice in the priests, and it was not abolished till the time of *Constantine*.* "And they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the Lord cast out before the children of Israel."

After the two pious princes, *Asa* and *Jehoshaphat*, came *Jehoram*, who, having married a daughter of *Ahab*, adopted his religion, which was the worship of *Baal*, after the manner of the *Tyrians;* and his son *Ahaziah* trod in his steps. In the reign of *Joash*, the worship of the true God was restored by the pious high-priest *Jehoiada*, and the succeeding princes are not much blamed till we come to *Ahaz*, who is said, 2 *Chron.* xxviii. 2, 3, to have "walked in the ways of the kings of Israel," and to have "made molten images for Baalim. Moreover he burned incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burned his children in the fire, after the abominations of the Heathens, whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel."

Ahaz was succeeded by the pious *Hezekiah*, in whose reign there occurs a miracle the most directly calculated to

* See Vol. VIII. p. 279; *Lardner* IV. p. 168.

establish the sole divinity of the God of Israel, and consequently the truth of the Mosaic dispensation, of any that we find in the history of the kings of Judah.

The ten tribes had been conquered, and carried into captivity, by *Shalmanezer* king of *Assyria*, in the sixth year of *Hezekiah*, agreeably to an express prediction of the prophet *Isaiah*, delivered in the first year of *Ahaz;* and in the fourteenth of his reign, *Sennacherib*, another king of Assyria, having greatly enlarged the bounds of his empire, invaded *Judah;* and having taken some of the defenceless cities, he sent an insulting message to Hezekiah, demanding the surrender of his country, and admonishing him not to trust in the protection of his God. In his address to the people on this occasion, he says, *Isa.* xxxvi. 18—20, "Nor let Hezekiah seduce you, saying, Jehovah will deliver us. Have the gods of the nations delivered each his own land from the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arphad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who are there among all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their own lands out of my hand; that Jehovah should deliver out of my hand Jerusalem?"* I cannot help observing by the way, how temporal prosperity was considered in these times as a proof of the power of the gods that were acknowledged by different nations; and on this account, perhaps, as I have observed, the true God was pleased to propose temporal felicity as the sanction of the religion instituted by Moses, taking the test of real divinity that was actually adopted by all nations. But to resume the thread of this remarkable history.

In this distressing situation this pious prince, having no sufficient force to oppose to this haughty and powerful invader, applied to the prophet *Isaiah*, who immediately answered, *Ch.* xxxvi. 6, 7, "Thus shall ye say to your lord: Thus saith Jehovah: Be not afraid because of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Behold, I will infuse a spirit into him; and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land."†

* Bp. *Lowth*, whose *version* with the *versions*, of *Blayney* and *Newcome*, I shall quote in this and the succeeding volume, as likely to be preferred by most readers, to the common translation, which my Author had generally copied in these *Discourses*. See, however, his approbation of the *modern versions*, Vol. XI. p. 13; Vol. XII. p. 413, *Note;* see also *ibid.* p. 445, *Note* *.

† Bp. *Lowth*.

After this a letter was sent by the king of *Assyria* to *Hezekiah*, to the same purport with the preceding message. This letter Hezekiah took to the Temple, *Isaiah* xxxvii. 14, *and spread it before the Lord;* at the same time making the following solemn prayer: "O Jehovah, God of hosts, thou God of Israel, who art seated on the cherubim! Thou art the God, thou alone, to all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made the heavens and the earth! Incline, O Jehovah, thine ear, and hear; open, O Jehovah, thine eyes, and see: yea, hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he hath sent to reproach the living God. In truth, O Jehovah, the kings of Assyria have destroyed all the nations, and their lands; and have cast their gods into the fire: for they were not gods, but the work of the hands of man, wood and stone; therefore they have destroyed them. And now, O Jehovah our God, save us, we beseech thee, from his hand; that all the kingdoms of the earth may know, that thou Jehovah art the only God."*

Upon this, *Isaiah* was directed to send to the king, and he concluded his message with saying, "Therefore, thus saith Jehovah concerning the king of Assyria:

> He shall not enter into this city;
> Nor shall he shoot an arrow there;
> Nor shall he present a shield before it;
> Nor shall he cast up a mound against it.
> By the way in which he came, by the same shall he return;
> And into this city shall he not come, saith Jehovah.
> And I will protect this city to deliver it;
> For mine own sake, and for the sake of David my servant."†

The event verified this prediction; for after this we read, *Isaiah* xxxvii. 36, "And the angel of Jehovah went forth and smote in the camp of the Assyrians, a hundred and four score and five thousand men: and when the people *(the remainder)* arose early in the morning, behold they were all dead corpses."‡ This sudden destruction of the army of the *Assyrians* is mentioned by *Herodotus*, the oldest Heathen historian.§ After this, to verify the remainder of the prophecy, the following events took place: *Sennacherib*, after his return to *Nineveh* his capital, was killed by two of his sons, as he was worshipping in the house of *Nisroch*, his

* *Vers.* 16—20, Bp. *Lowth.*
† *Isaiah* xxxvii. 32—34, Bp. *Lowth.*
‡ *Ibid.* See Vol. XII. p. 192.
§ See, on 2 *Kings* xix. 35, Vol. XI. p. 473.

god, as it were to demonstrate the impotence of this boasted god to save his most zealous worshipper.

Notwithstanding this most extraordinary event, *Manasseh*, the son of *Hezekiah*, but who was born after this time, and who came to the throne at the early age of twelve years, falling, as we may well suppose, into the hands of evil counsellors, revolted to the worship of *Baal*, and, as we read, 2 *Chron.* xxxiii. 3, "worshipped all the host of heaven and served them." He even built altars to them in the Temple itself. "He built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord, and he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom. Also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards." For this he was carried captive to *Babylon;* but, on his repentance, he was restored to his own country.

The only good reign after this was that of *Josiah*, and in thirty years after his death, the long-threatened judgments of God overtook that apostate nation, for they were conquered, Jerusalem and the Temple destroyed, and the people carried captive by *Nebuchadnezzar*, king of Babylon, about a hundred years after the conquest and captivity of the ten tribes by the *Assyrians*.

During this long captivity in Babylon, continuing, according to the express prediction of *Jeremiah*,* seventy years, God did not forsake his chosen people. Two eminent prophets, *Ezekiel* and *Daniel*, whose predictions look into the remotest times, even beyond those in which we live, were raised up there, and in *Babylon* itself, emphatically called [*Rev.* xvii. 5] *the mother of harlots*, or idols, a city the most noted for its addictedness to idolatry of any in the ancient world, and as it were the parent of idolatry to all the rest. We find at this time signal displays of the power of the true God, in direct opposition to this idolatry; and the miracles which were wrought for this purpose, evidently had a great effect at the time, and probably so impressed the minds of *Nebuchadnezzar*, *Darius the Mede*, and *Cyrus*, as both to procure the Jews better treatment during the captivity, and their final release from it.

Daniel first brought himself into the favourable notice of *Nebuchadnezzar* and the people of *Babylon*, by being enabled not only to interpret a remarkable dream of that prince's, but to inform him what the dream was when he had forgotten it

* *Ch.* xxv. 11, xxix. 10. See Vol. XII. pp. 232, 235.

himself, and when, as might be expected, all the astrologers and magicians of Babylon had not been able to do it. On this, Nebuchadnezzar was induced to declare, *Dan.* ii. 47, "Of a truth it is that your God is a God of gods, and Lord of lords, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret."*

Daniel also interpreted another dream of *Nebuchadnezzar's*, which foretold his own degradation, and his restoration to his understanding and his kingdom, after a period of seven years, which drew from that prince a remarkable narrative, in the form of a public decree, to be circulated through his whole empire, addressed, in his own lofty style, "unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth." It begins in this solemn manner: "I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders which the high God hath wrought toward me. How great are his signs and how mighty are his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation." And it concludes thus: "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment; and those that walk in pride he is able to abase." [*Dan.* iv. 1—3, 37.]

Lastly, *Daniel* interpreted the awful hand-writing on the wall, at the impious feast of *Belshazzar*, and thereby foretold the fall of the *Babylonian* empire, which was immediately accomplished; for in that very night was Belshazzar slain, and the kingdom of the *Medes* and *Persians* established.

Under *Darius the Mede* Daniel was miraculously delivered from the den of lions, into which he had been thrown for the profession of his religion, by a decree artfully drawn from that king. That these lions did not spare Daniel on account of some casual indisposition, appeared from their seizing and devouring his enemies, whom the king ordered to be thrown to the same lions as soon as Daniel was taken out of their den. For we read, *Dan.* vi. 24, that they "brake all their bones in pieces, or ever they came to the bottom of the den." This remarkable deliverance drew from *Darius* as remarkable a decree, *Dan.* vi. 25—27: "Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth, Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree that, in every dominion of my kingdom, men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel;† for he is

* See Vol. XII. p. 315. † See, on *ver.* 26, Vol. XII. p. 322.

the living God, and *standeth* for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end;—who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."

But the miracle that was more particularly calculated to demonstrate the superiority of the true God with respect to the idols of Babylon, was one in which Daniel had no personal concern. It was the deliverance of his companions, *Shadrach*, *Meshech*, and *Abednego*, from the fiery furnace, for refusing to fall down and worship a golden image which Nebuchadnezzar had set up. The furnace was even heated seven times for this purpose, and yet these three men, the worshippers of the true God, after they were cast into it, were seen walking about at their ease, in the midst of the fire, accompanied by a fourth person, who was probably an angel. Nebuchadnezzar, having himself seen them in this situation, ordered them to be called out, and then made the following declaration and decree, *Dan.* iii. 28, 29: "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god except their own God. Therefore I make a decree, that every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss *of* (or against) the God of Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their house shall be made a dunghill, because there is no other god that can deliver after this sort." Thus were these idolaters brought to confess the superiority of the true God; and though these miracles did not induce them to abandon the worship of their own gods, they must have made a strong impression in favour of the Jews and their religion.

The impression which these miracles made on the *Babylonians*, and other foreign nations, does not appear, for want of sufficiently ample histories of those times. But the probability is, that many individuals, though not any whole nation, became converts to the fundamental principles of the Jewish religion, as great numbers did in after times, without becoming proper proselytes to Judaism. This was remarkably the case in our Saviour's time. Many of the Gentiles, especially such as resided in Judea, or the neighbourhood of it, as Cornelius of *Cæsarea* and the centurion of *Capernaum*, rejected the absurdities of polytheism, and privately worshipped the one true God. This we also find had the happiest effect on their conduct, as in those two

persons, who were eminent for their piety and benevolence, and of whom by accident we have a particular account. And this, it is to be observed, was antecedent to, and independently of, any thing that was done by Christ, or Christianity. It is also observable, that we meet with no miracles, or pretension to miracles, from the time of the Babylonish Captivity to the time of Christ; so that whatever good impressions had been made on the minds of any, in favour of the Jewish religion, it must have been produced by the miracles of preceding ages, and therefore their credibility must have been well established.

Whatever was the effect of these miraculous events on the neighbouring nations, the impression was never effaced from the minds of the Jews. For, from having been, in a remarkable degree, prone to idolatry, (which is a circumstance highly favourable to the credibility of the miracles calculated to counteract that tendency,) it is from this æra that we date their peculiarly unshaken attachment to their religion, and their inexpressible aversion to idolatry, and to every thing approaching to it.

Two circumstances, besides the direct impression of the miracles above-mentioned, may have contributed to this. The first was the complete fulfilment of the prophecies of Moses concerning their being driven from their own country, on account of their addictedness to idolatry, and the vices accompanying it, together with the equally literal fulfilment of the prophecy of *Jeremiah* respecting their return, and the fall of the Babylonish empire. Their sufferings before this had been slight, and of short continuance compared with these.

The second circumstance was the clear conviction that the idols of *Babylon* had not been able to defend that city from the arms of the *Medes* and *Persians*, who had no idols, and whose conquest had been foretold by *Daniel*. And it must not be forgotten, that in those days, and long after, the great test of the goodness of any religion was the temporal prosperity with which the observance of its rites was accompanied; on which account, as I have observed before, temporal prosperity might have been annexed by the Divine Being to the observance of the Jewish religion. Whereas, however, the history of other nations, examined by this test, is far from furnishing any proof of the truth of their religions, that of the Jews, from their taking possession of the land of Canaan, to their captivity in Babylon (in which, being of considerable extent, they had sufficient leisure to

reflect on the subject) supplies an abundant proof of the truth of theirs. Nothing, however, but this full conviction can account for the remarkable fact, of the total change in the disposition and hearts of the whole Jewish nation after this time, and which has continued to this day, without the least prospect of a change; though in all this time they do not pretend that any miracles have been wrought in attestation of it. For though they had prophets after their return from Babylon, viz. *Haggai*, *Zechariah*, and *Malachi*, it does not appear that they wrought any miracles. They only foretold future and distant events, and exhorted the people in the name of God.

This important subject of prophecy I reserve for the subject of another discourse.

DISCOURSE VIII.

Of the Prophecies

CONCERNING THE DISPERSION AND RESTORATION OF THE JEWS.

DEUT. XXX. 19:

I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing.

IN my last discourse I observed that the remarkable change in the disposition and conduct of the Jews, which took place from the time of the Babylonish Captivity, may be, in a great measure, at least, accounted for, from the very striking fulfilment of the prophecies of *Moses* and *Jeremiah*, in that captivity. The prophecies of Moses concerning the calamities and intire dispersion of the Israelites, and likewise his prophecies, and those of others who succeeded him, concerning their return to their own country, after their expulsion from it, and their dispersion into all parts of the world, and concerning their prosperous state afterwards, are so very remarkable, and add so much to the evidence of the divine mission of Moses, and of those other prophets, and consequently to that of the truth of the Jewish religion, that, after considering, as I have done, the *miracles*

that were expressly wrought for that purpose, I shall make *them* the subject of this discourse.

The prophecies of Moses will appear more extraordinary, if we consider the circumstances of the Israelites at the time in which they were delivered. They had just left Egypt, and had not then obtained possession of the land of Canaan; and yet Moses not only speaks with the greatest certainty of their conquering that country, then fully peopled, and in the possession of nations far more powerful than they, but of their future expulsion from that country, in consequence of sins not then committed, and to appearance very unlikely ever to be committed, viz. an apostasy from their religion, confirmed by recent miracles, of which it was impossible that they should entertain the smallest doubt. But what is infinitely more extraordinary, he foretells their restoration to their country in a very distant period; and that after this they should be the first of nations, and that all the promises of God to *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, would then be illustriously fulfilled.

Moses not only foretold the calamities of the Israelites, and their expulsion from the promised land, *conditionally*, in which case it could not have been considered as much more than a threatening, but *absolutely*. For thus we read, Deut. xxxi. 16—18: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land whither they go to be amongst them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them. Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befal them, so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us? And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods." Accordingly Moses says, *Deut.* xxxi. 29, "I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you, and evil will befal you in the latter days, because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger, through the work of your hands."

As a more solemn warning still, Moses was directed to compose a hymn, in which particular mention should be made of the judgments of God in consequence of their future apostasy, a hymn which he was to commit to writing,

and which the people were to learn by heart. *Deut.* xxxi. 19—22: "Now, therefore, write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel.—For when I shall have brought them into the land which I sware unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey, and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat, then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant. And it shall come to pass that when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them, as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed. For I know their imagination which they go about, even now before I have brought them into the land which I sware.* Moses therefore wrote this song the same day, and taught it the children of Israel." This remarkable song, or poetical composition, remains to this day; and yet the nation, though warned in this uncommonly solemn manner, brought upon themselves all the calamities announced in it.

This prophecy concerning the judgments of God upon the Israelitish nation, and especially so remarkable an event as their expulsion from the land of Canaan, and their dispersion among all nations, is not contained in a single obscure passage in the writings of Moses, but it is repeated again and again, in the plainest language that can be used. Nor is the prophecy expressed in general terms only, but many particulars are mentioned, and all of them are so fully come to pass, as is evident at this day, that every person who gives due attention to the facts, must be struck with the correspondence.

You will farther observe the peculiar solemnity and affection, with which these judgments are announced. Had Moses been literally the father of the whole nation, he could not have expressed himself with more affectionate concern. *Deut.* iv. 25—28: "When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and shalt have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, and shall do evil in the sight of the Lord thy God, to provoke him to anger, I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it. Ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed. And the Lord shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few

* See, on *ver.* 21, Vol. XI. p. 297; on *Amos* v. 26, Vol. XII. p. 362.

in number among the Heathen whither the Lord shall lead you, and there ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell."

This is a subject much dwelt upon by this eminent legislator and prophet; and in other passages of his writings some more circumstances attending these great calamities, and this total dispersion of the Israelites, are mentioned. In *Lev.* xxvi. 29, 31—36, 38, he says, "Ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat,* and I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries into desolation, and I will not smell the savour of your sweet odours; and I will bring the land into desolation, and your enemies *shall* dwell therein, *and* be astonished at it; and I will scatter you among the Heathen, and will draw out a sword after you, and your lands shall be desolate, and your cities waste. Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths.—And ye shall perish among the Heathen, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up."

Deut. xxviii. 25: "The Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies. Thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them, and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth." *Vers.* 36, 37: "The Lord shall bring thee and thy king, which thou shalt set over thee," (and this you will observe was written before the Israelites had any king, and when their constitution did not suppose any,) "unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone. And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word, among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee." *Vers.* 47—52: "Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things, therefore shalt thou serve thine *enemy*, which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things; and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck until he have destroyed thee. The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth, a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand, a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old,

* See, on *ver.* 29, Vol. XI. p. 222.

nor shew favour to the young. And he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed.—And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land."* *Vers.* 62, 64, 65: "And ye shall be left few in number,† whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude, because thou wouldest not obey the voice of the Lord thy God.—And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from one end of the earth even unto the other. And among those nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest; but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind." *Ver.* 68: "And the Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee. Thou shalt see it no more again. And there ye shall be sold unto your enemies, for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you."‡

The manner in which both the Israelites in distant ages, and strangers, who shall see the accomplishment of these awful predictions, shall be impressed by them, is particularly mentioned by this prophet, *Deut.* xxix. 22, 24—28: "The generation to come, of your children that shall rise up after you, and the stranger that shall come from a far land, shall say, when they see the plagues of that land, and the sicknesses which the Lord *shall lay* upon it;—even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land? What meaneth the heat of this great anger?§ Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt. For they went and served other gods, and worshipped them; gods whom they knew not, and whom he had not given unto them. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against this land, to bring upon it all the curses that are written in this book. And the Lord rooted them out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as it is this day."

The well-known history and present state of the Jews make it unnecessary for me to dwell long upon the accomplishment of these remarkable prophecies. The extermination and dispersion of the Israelites began at the captivity of the ten tribes by the Assyrians, followed by that of the

* See Vol. XI. p. 294. † See *ibid.* ‡ See *ibid.*
§ See *ibid.* pp. 295, 296.

tribe of Judah by the Babylonians, but was, in the most signal manner, completed by the Romans, a nation that indeed *came from far*, and *whose language they did not understand*. The war, conducted by *Vespasian* and *Titus*, was dreadfully calamitous, and the siege of Jerusalem such as yet remains unequalled, in all history, for distress and the destruction of men. So great was the famine with which they were pressed, that there are instances on record of women actually killing and eating their own children.

At the close of that war, all the markets for slaves were so much overstocked with Jews, that they bore no price, and great numbers were taken to Egypt by sea, and disposed of there. But even this was not the completion of their calamities. Under the emperor *Adrian*, the Jews were effectually driven out of Judea, and none of them suffered to reside in it. From this time the country has gradually become desert, so that hardly a vestige of its ancient fertility can be found. All the inhabitants, of whom very few are Jews, one of the latest travellers says, do not exceed fifty thousand.*

Of the total dispersion of the Jews into all the most distant parts of the world, every nation, and among them ourselves, are witnesses. For there is no country on the face of the earth in which Jews are not to be found; and among those, they have met with all the calamities predicted by Moses. Wherever they have gone, the sword has, indeed, followed them. We no where read of such massacres as have been made of the Jews, especially in all Christian countries; and in consequence of these events, they have been overwhelmed with dread and terror, fearful of every thing that can expose them to farther ill usage, as we see at this day; so that, far from shewing any eagerness to make proselytes, as they were formerly wont to do, they carefully avoid making any, and give no encouragement to the few who are disposed to join them. They are also at this very time, and have been for ages, a proverb and a by-word among all nations, no people being exposed to so much contempt and insult, as well as cruel usage of every other kind, as the Jews. How far they may have contributed to bring this ill usage upon themselves, is not at all material to my purpose, the fact being indisputably such as Moses predicted.

In this great dispersion, the Jews have, in many cases,

* This "computation of *Volney*" my Author corrected on other authorities, which reckon "more than twice that number." See Vol. VIII. p. 92, *Note* ¶.

openly abandoned the religion of their ancestors, professing it secretly, but concealing it with the greatest care. This has been particularly the case with the Jews in *Spain* and *Portugal*, where many of them have not only made public profession of Christianity, but in that character have enjoyed high offices in the church, and even in the Inquisition; and yet, when they have made their escape, they have renounced every badge of Christianity, and gloried in their attachment to their own religion.

But most literally has this prophecy been fulfilled in the ten tribes, few of whom ever returned to *Palestine*, and not being at present distinguished from other nations, they have, no doubt, adopted their idolatrous religions. It is not improbable, however, but that they somewhere form a distinct people, and that in due time their origin may be discovered. Some traces of them have of late appeared.* According to the sure word of prophecy, they are to be brought back to the land of Canaan, as well as the Jews.

The literal fulfilment of these prophecies, concerning the calamities and total dispersion of the Israelites, must satisfy that nation, and in time all mankind, that Moses was inspired in delivering them; and, therefore, they have the fullest confidence in the accomplishment of his other prophecies concerning their future restoration and flourishing state, which are as distinct and express as those concerning their calamities, and far more numerous. They are not only contained in *Moses*, but the favourite subject is resumed, enlarged upon, and set in a thousand different lights, by *Isaiah*, and most of the succeeding prophets. As this is a much more pleasing subject than the former, and especially as I flatter myself we are now [1794] drawing sensibly nearer to the accomplishment of these prophecies, I shall recite a considerable number of them. You will find them equally clear and free from ambiguity, so that there can be no doubt concerning their meaning, and, consequently, if we believe in revelation, concerning their literal accomplishment.

Moses, who so expressly foretold the dispersion of the Jews among the most distant nations of the world, says,

* Sir William Jones, with considerable probability, conjectures that the Afghans, a people living between Persia and Indostan, are of Israelitish extraction. *(P.)* See Vol. XI. pp. 223, 468, and the *Preface* to *Discourses*, 1796, in Vol. XVI. On the probability that "wanderers of the ten tribes" settled in *America*, see Vol. II. p. 206, *Note* †; *Life of Eliot*, Ed. 3, 1694, pp. 89, 90; *Beatty's Journal*, 1768, *Appendix*, pp. 84—92; "An Essay on the Propagation of the Gospel, by Charles Crawford," Ed. 2, *Philadelphia*, 1801, pp. 1—20.

Lev. xxvi. 44, 45, "And yet for all that, when they *shall* be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God. But I will, for their sakes, remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt, in the sight of the Heathen, that I might be their God. I am the Lord."

Having foretold the dispersion of the Israelites into the most distant regions, he adds, *Deut.* iv. 29—31, "But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul. When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice, (for the Lord thy God is a merciful God,) he will not forsake thee, *nor* destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers, which he sware unto them." *Ch.* xxx. 1—5: "And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind, among all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey his voice, according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return, and gather thee from all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. And if any of thine be driven out unto the outmost part of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee. And the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it, and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers." That the future prosperity of the Israelites, though thus conditionally announced, will absolutely take place, what follows clearly expresses. The nation will, in fact, become such as the promise requires. "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." [*Verse* 6.]

After *Moses*, we find no prophecy relating to this subject till we come to the latter times of the kings of *Judah*, about eight hundred years before the Christian æra. But they abound in the writings of *Joel*, *Amos*, *Hosea*, *Isaiah*, *Jere-*

miah, *Ezekiel*, *Obadiah* and *Daniel*, before the return from Babylon, and in those of *Haggai*, *Zechariah*, and *Malachi*, after it. To quote the whole of what these prophets say on this subject, would be to copy a great part, if not the greater part, of their prophecies; for the future flourishing state of their nation is the great and favourite theme of all their writings. But as the subject is of particular importance, and appears to me not to have been sufficiently attended to, or understood, by Christians who have supposed many of the prophecies to have been figurative, and to have been designed to express the state of the Christian church, and not that of the Jewish nation, I shall recite a considerable number of the passages, to satisfy you they do not admit of any such figurative interpretation.

You will observe, as I recite them, that the prophecies concerning the restoration of the *Israelites* to the land of *Palestine* are generally accompanied with predictions of the glorious state of this extraordinary, though now despised and abject, nation, after their return, and also concerning the heavy judgments which will fall upon all the nations that have oppressed them, and especially those who shall oppose their return, or endeavour to disturb them after it. You will clearly see, from the express mention that is made of the quiet and undisturbed enjoyment of their country, which is promised to the Israelites, that these prophecies were by no means fulfilled at the return from the *Babylonish* Captivity.

The predictions concerning the return of the ten tribes is a farther evidence of the same thing; besides that, after their restoration, all the twelve tribes are to make but one nation, and are to be governed by *a prince of the house of David*. Then also will be a time of universal peace and happiness through all the world, all mankind becoming worshippers of the one true God, and having the highest respect for his peculiar people, if not under some kind of subjection to them. I shall recite the passages according to the order of the time in which they were delivered, and without intermixing many particular observations by way of illustration; for it will be seen that they require none.

And I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel;
And they shall build the desolate cities, and shall inhabit *them*;
And they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof;
They shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit thereof.
And I will plant them upon their land;

And they shall no more be rooted up
From the land which I have given them,
Saith Jehovah, thy God.*
For the sons of Israel shall abide many days
Without a king, and without a prince;
And without sacrifice, and without a statue;
And without an ephod, and *without* teraphim.
Afterward shall the sons of Israel return,
And shall seek Jehovah their God,
And David their king;
And shall fear Jehovah, and his goodness, in the latter days.†
It shall come to pass in the latter days;
The mountain of the house of Jehovah shall be established on the top of the mountains;
And it shall be exalted above the hills:
And all nations shall flow unto it.
And many peoples shall go, and shall say,
Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah;
To the house of the God of Jacob;
And he will teach us of his ways;
And we will walk in his paths:
For from Sion shall go forth the law;
And the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem.
And he shall judge among the nations;
And shall work conviction in many peoples:
And they shall beat their swords into plough-shares,
And their spears into pruning-hooks:
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation;
Neither shall they learn war any more.‡
And it shall come to pass in that day,
The root of Jesse, which standeth for an ensign to the peoples,
Unto him shall the nations repair,
And his resting-place shall be glorious.
And it shall come to pass in that day,
Jehovah shall again the second time put forth his hand,
To recover the remnant of his people,
That remaineth from Assyria, and from Egypt;
And from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam;
And from Shinear, and from Hamath, and from the Western regions.
And he shall lift up a signal to the nations;
And he shall gather the outcasts of Israel,
And the dispersed of Judah shall he collect,
From the four extremities of the earth.
And the jealousy of Ephraim shall cease;
And the enmity of Judah shall be no more:
Ephraim shall not be jealous of Judah;
And Judah shall not be at enmity with Ephraim. §
Fear thou not, for I am with thee:

* *Amos* ix. 14, 15, *Newcome.* See Vol. XII. p. 414.
† *Hosea* iii. 4, 5, *Newcome.* ‡ *Isaiah* ii. 2—4, Bp. *Lowth.*
§ *Isaiah* xi. 10—13, Bp. *Lowth.*

From the East I will bring thy children,
And from the West I will gather thee together:
I will say to the North, Give up;
And to the South, Withhold not:
Bring my sons from afar;
And my daughters from the ends of the earth.†

The regard that God retains for his ancient people during their dispersion, is thus beautifully represented by this prophet:

But Sion sayeth: Jehovah hath forsaken me;
And my Lord hath forgotten me.
Can a woman forget her sucking infant;
That she should have no tenderness for the son of her womb?
Even these may forget;
But I will not forget thee.
Behold, on the palms of my hands have I delineated thee.
Thy walls are for ever in my sight.‡
Thus saith the Lord Jehovah:
Behold, I will lift up my hand to the nations;
And to the peoples will I exalt my signal;
And they shall bring thy sons in their bosom,
And thy daughters shall be borne on their shoulder:
And kings shall be thy foster-fathers,
And their queens thy nursing mothers:
With their faces to the earth they shall bow down unto thee,
And shall lick the dust of thy feet.
And thou shalt know, that I am Jehovah;
And that they, who trust in him, shall not be ashamed.
Shall the spoil be taken away from the mighty?
Or shall the prey seized by the terrible be rescued?
Yea, thus saith Jehovah;
Even the prey of the mighty shall be retaken;
And the spoil seized by the terrible shall be rescued:
For with those that contend with thee, I will contend;
And thy children I will deliver.
And I will gorge thine oppressors with their own flesh;
And with their own blood, as with new wine, will I drench them:
And all flesh shall know,
That I Jehovah am thy saviour;
And that thy redeemer is the Mighty One of Jacob.§

The calamities and the dispersion of the Jews have been of long continuance; but, according to the following representation, all their sufferings will bear but a small proportion to their future glory and happiness:

For thy husband is thy maker;
Jehovah God of Hosts is his name:

* *Isaiah* xliii. 5, 6, Bp. *Lowth.* † *Isaiah* xlix. 14—16, Bp. *Lowth.*
‡ *Isaiah* xlix. 22—26, Bp. *Lowth.*

And thy redeemer is the Holy One of Israel;
The God of the whole earth shall he be called.
For as a woman forsaken, and deeply afflicted, hath Jehovah recalled thee;
And as a wife, wedded in youth, but afterwards rejected, saith thy God.
In a little anger have I forsaken thee;
But with great mercies will I receive thee again:
In a short wrath I hid my face for a moment from thee;
But with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee;
Saith thy redeemer Jehovah.*
Lift up thine eyes round about, and see;
All of them are gathered together, they come unto thee:
Thy sons shall come from afar; and thy daughters shall be carried at the side.†
Who are these, that fly like a cloud?
And like doves upon the wing?
Verily the distant coasts shall await me;
And the ships of Tarshish among the first:
To bring thy sons from afar;
Their silver and their gold with them:
Because of the name of Jehovah thy God;
And of the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.
And the sons of the stranger shall build up thy walls;
And their kings shall minister unto thee:
For in my wrath I smote thee;
But in my favour I will embrace thee with the most tender affection.
And thy gates shall be open continually:
By day, or by night, they shall not be shut:
To bring unto thee the wealth of the nations;
And that their kings may come pompously attended.
For that nation, and that kingdom,
Which will not serve thee, shall perish;
Yea, those nations shall be utterly desolated.
The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee;
The fir-tree, the pine, and the box together:
To adorn the place of my sanctuary;
And that I may glorify the place, whereon I rest my feet.
And the sons of thine oppressors shall come bending before thee;
And all, that scornfully rejected thee, shall do obeisance to the soles of thy feet:
And they shall call thee, The City of Jehovah;
The Sion of the Holy One of Israel.
Instead of thy being forsaken,
And hated, so that no one passed through thee;
I will make thee an everlasting boast;
A subject of joy for perpetual generations.
And thou shalt suck the milk of nations;

* *Isaiah* liv. 5—8, Bp. *Lowth.*
† *Isaiah* lx. 4, Bp. *Lowth.* See Vol. XII. p. 206.

Even at the breast of kings shalt thou be fostered:
And thou shalt know, that I Jehovah am thy saviour;
And that thy redeemer is the Mighty One of Jacob.*
Behold, I will work with thee for thy sake at that time:
And I will save her that halteth, and her that is driven out will I assemble;
And I will make them a praise, and a name,
In every land where they have been put to confusion.
At that time will I bring you *again:*
And at the time when I assemble you, surely I will appoint you a name, and a praise
Among all people of the earth:
When I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith Jehovah.†
After this, behold, the days shall come, saith Jehovah,
When it shall no more be said, As Jehovah liveth,
Who brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt:
But, As Jehovah liveth,
Who brought up the children of Israel out of the north country,
And out of all the lands whither he had driven them;
For I will cause them to return unto their own land,
Which I gave unto their fathers.‡

Jer. xxx. 3: "For behold the days are coming, saith Jehovah, when I will reverse the captivity of my people, Israel and Judah, saith Jehovah; and I will bring them back to the land which I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it."§

Therefore, fear thou not,
O my servant Jacob, saith Jehovah;
And be not thou dismayed, O Israel;
For, behold, I will bring thee safe from afar,
And thy seed from the land of their captivity;
And Jacob shall again be at rest,
He shall also be secure, and there shall be none to make him afraid.
For I will be with thee,
Saith Jehovah, to save thee;
When I shall make a full end of all the nations,
Whither I have dispersed thee,
Yet will I not make a full end of thee:
But I will correct thee with moderation,
And will not make thee altogether desolate.‖

Ezek. xxviii. 25: "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: When I assemble the house of Israel from the people among whom they are scattered; *then* will I be sanctified through them, in the sight of the nations, and they shall dwell in their land which I gave to my servant, *even* to Jacob; they shall even

* *Isaiah* lx. 8—16, Bp. *Lowth.* † *Zeph.* iii. 19, 20, *Newcome.*
‡ *Jer.* xvi. 14, 15, *Blayney.* See Vol. XII. p. 226. § *Blayney.*
‖ *Vers.* 10, 11, *Blayney.*

dwell therein securely, and shall build houses, and plant vineyards, and dwell securely, when I have executed judgments upon all that despised them round about: and they shall know that I *am* Jehovah their God." *

The change of character that will take place in the Israelites in general, without which they could not be proper objects of the Divine favour, is foretold, and happily expressed by this prophet, *Ch.* xxxvi. 24—28: "For I will take you from among the nations, and gather you out of all countries; and bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be cleansed from all your defilements; and from all your idols will I cleanse you. I will also give you a new heart, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh. And my spirit will I put within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and to keep my judgments and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land which I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.—*Ver.* 31: Then shall ye remember your evil ways, and your doings that *were* not good; and ye shall loathe yourselves for your iniquities, and for your abominations.—*Ver.* 36: Then the nations that are left round about you shall know that I Jehovah have built the ruined places, *and* planted the *land which was* desolate: I Jehovah have spoken *it*, and I will do *it*."†

Ezek. xxxvii. 21, 22, 26—28: "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations whither they are gone, and will gather them from every side, and bring them into their own land. And I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all. And I will make with them a covenant of peace; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will place them, and multiply them; and will place my sanctuary in the midst of them for ever. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the nations shall know that I Jehovah sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for ever."‡

The prophets from whose writings these extracts are made, lived before, or during, the captivity at Babylon; but those whose writings I shall now proceed to quote, lived after it.

* *Newcome.* † *Ibid.* ‡ *Ibid.*

They must, therefore, refer to some event that was then foreseen, and it is, evidently, still future.

And it shall come to pass *that*, as ye have been a curse among the nations,
O house of Judah, and O house of Israel,
I will so save you that ye shall be a blessing.
Fear ye not: let your hands be strong.
For thus saith Jehovah *God* of hosts:
As I thought to do you evil,
When your fathers provoked me to anger,
Saith Jehovah *God* of hosts,
And I repented not;
So have I again thought, in these days,
To do good unto Jerusalem,
And unto the house of Judah. Fear ye not.
Thus saith Jehovah, *God* of hosts:
It shall yet *come to pass*, that many people shall come,
And the inhabitants of many cities:
And the inhabitants of one *city* shall go
Unto another, saying:
Let us surely go to entreat the face of Jehovah,
And to seek Jehovah *God* of hosts:
I will go also.
And many people, and mighty nations, shall come
To seek Jehovah *God* of hosts in Jerusalem,
And to entreat the face of Jehovah.
Thus saith Jehovah *God* of hosts:
That in those days ten men shall take hold,
From among all the languages of the nations,
They shall even take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew,
Saying; We will go with you:
For we have heard *that* God *is* with you.*
And it shall come to pass, in that day,
That I will seek to destroy all the nations
Which come against Jerusalem.
And I will pour upon the house of David,
And upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem,
A spirit of favour and of supplications:
And they shall look on him whom they pierced;
And they shall mourn for him, as *with* the mourning for an only son:
And the bitterness for him *shall be* as the bitterness for a first-born."†

This passage is particularly remarkable, as it seems to imply the repentance and regret of the Israelitish nation for the crucifixion of Jesus, and, consequently, their conversion to Christianity. But this will probably be an event subsequent to their return to Palestine.

* *Zech.* viii. 13—15, 20—23, *Newcome*, see his *Note;* Vol. XII. p. 396.
† *Zech.* xii. 9, 10, *Newcome.*

The same prophet *Zechariah*, speaking of Jerusalem, says,

And men shall dwell therein, and there shall be no more curse;
And Jerusalem shall be inhabited in security.
And it shall come to pass *that* every one who is left among all the nations,
Which came against Jerusalem,
Shall go up from year to year
To worship the King, Jehovah *God* of hosts,
And to keep the feast of tabernacles.
And it shall come to pass *that* whoever will not go up,
Of the families of the earth unto Jerusalem,
To worship the King, Jehovah *God* of hosts,
Upon them shall be no rain.
But if the family of Egypt,
Go not up, and come not;
Upon them shall be the calamity
With which Jehovah shall smite the nations
Who go not up
To keep the feast of tabernacles.
This shall be the punishment of Egypt,
And the punishment of all the nations
Who go not up
To keep the feast of tabernacles:†
Behold I *will* send my Messenger,
And he shall prepare the way before me:
And the Lord whom ye seek
Shall suddenly come to his temple,
Even the messenger of the covenant in whom ye delight:
Behold, he shall come, saith Jehovah *God* of hosts.
But who shall abide the day of his coming?
And who shall stand when he appeareth?
For he *is* like the fire of a refiner,
And like the sope of fullers.
And he shall sit *as* a refiner and purifier of silver;
And he shall purify the sons of Levi,‡
And shall refine them as gold and as silver;
And they shall bring near unto Jehovah an offering in righteousness.
Then shall the offering of Judah and of Jerusalem be pleasing unto Jehovah.
As *in* the days of old, and as *in* former years.
And all the nations shall call you blessed:
For ye shall be a pleasant land,
Saith Jehovah *God* of hosts."‡

With what feelings must pious Jews, in their present dispersed and oppressed state, meditate on such predictions as these that I have now read to you; and these, I may

* *Zech.* xiv. 11, 16—19, *Newcome.*
† See, on *ver.* 3, Vol. XII. p. 408.
‡ *Mal.* iii. 1—4, 12, *Newcome.*

truly say, are not perhaps a hundredth part of what their prophets have delivered to them on this subject; for it is the great burden of all their writings. How must they be impressed with the idea of their nation being the chosen people of God, when they can trace their origin (which no other nation is able to do) from the first of the human race; when they can review all the wonderful dispensations of Providence respecting them; when they now find themselves in the very situation that Moses predicted more than three thousand years ago, and therefore cannot entertain a doubt concerning the state of high pre-eminence over all other nations, which is with no less clearness promised to them in future time! Can we wonder at the firmness of the faith of the Jews, and at their adherence to their religion, when they are continually reading such prophecies as I have read to you? Can we wonder even at their pride, and undue contempt of all other nations? Who would not be proud of so illustrious a descent, and so glorious a destination as they alone can boast of? How little is the impression that the contempt of the world must have on such a people as this! To them it must be considered as the insolence of beggars to princes in disguise. To correct this pride, the most enlarged views, such as have not yet opened to them, are necessary, viz. that their God is as much the God and the Father of all the human race, as he is theirs, and that all pre-eminence, under his government, has for its real object, not the advantage of any part, though seemingly the most favoured, but of the whole of his family; and therefore, though the Israelites will be eminently distinguished and happy, it is only as the means of blessing all the race of mankind, far more numerous, and therefore, in the eye of God, far more important than they.

We cannot wonder at the ancient prophets, or rather the spirit by which they were inspired, dwelling so much on the subject of the future restoration of the Jews, when we consider that it is the great catastrophe to which tend all the dispensations of Providence, not to the Jews only, but to the whole world; when we consider that, by means of this one chosen nation, all mankind are to be brought to the knowledge, worship, and obedience, of the one true God, and that thus virtue, peace, and happiness, will become universal and uninterrupted.

In attending to the prophecies that I have recited, you must have been particularly struck, as I have been (and not without serious apprehensions for ourselves of this nation)

with the plain intimations of the heavy judgments that are denounced against every nation that has oppressed the Jews. For the English in former ages have not been the most favourably disposed towards this chosen people, but have, in the most barbarous manner, and without the least colour of reason or justice, massacred great numbers of them.*

These intimations concerning the fate of the nations who should oppress the Israelites in their dispersion, are as old as Moses. Having forewarned his countrymen of the judgments that would befal them in case of disobedience, under the form of *curses*, he says, [*Deut.* xxx. 7,] "The Lord thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and upon them that hate thee, which persecuted thee."

We may say that we, of this generation, have not persecuted the Jews, and that they have no particular reason to complain of *us*. But they were grievously persecuted by the English nation in former times, and have much to complain of *them;* and it is agreeable to the plan of Divine Providence, to punish nations and families as such, though

* See Vol. IX. pp. 258, 365, 462, 463. Lord *Coke*, "in the 7th volume of his cases," thus very coolly states the *legal* authority for such barbarities.

"The *Jews* and all other infidels are, in the eye of the law, *aliens* in the highest degree, *perpetui inimici*, perpetual enemies: for the law presumes not they will ever be converted; for between them, as with the *devil*, whose subjects they be, and the *Christian*, there is perpetual hostility, and can be no peace." See "An Answer to a Pamphlet, entitled, Considerations on the *Bill* to permit Persons professing the *Jewish* Religion, to be naturalized," by "The Citizens of London in the *Christian* Interest." 1753, Ed. 2, p. 11.

Our *Christian* kings, in prosecuting their *perpetual hostility*, were sometimes content "to squeeze money from the Jews." According to Lord *Coke*, "in his notes upon the Statute of Judaism," it appears that "from the 50th year of *Henry* III. to the 2nd year of *Edward* I. which was about seven years, [1266—1273,] the Crown received £420,000. 15*s.* 4*d.*, a prodigious sum, considering that silver was then but 20*d.* an ounce." *Ibid.* p. 9. The *Jews*, when banished from England in 1290, were in number, "according to *Matt. Westminster*, 16,160." *Parl. Hist.* I. p. 95. In the former reign, according to *Matt. Paris*, "*Henry* III. sold the Jews to Earl Richard his brother, that *quos rex excoriaverat, comes eviscerarat.*"

"The Citizens of London in the Christian Interest," (thus logically *inferring*, p. 18, "The *Jews* murdered Christ, and would murder us, if they had power," believing also, p. 19, "in their frequently crucifying Christian children on *Good Friday*") appear to have desired the revived operation of that "Statute Law passed in the 18th of Edward I." and "never repealed," which "made it *death* for a *Jew* to be found in England." *Advert.* These *Christian* citizens immediately proceed thus to complain: "Those out-lawed blasphemers have, by some unaccountable fatality, been suffered to return from their banishment, and have got vast interest among us, and are carrying on great schemes. They have got the management of all money matters. We begin to feel their weight in the great companies. They want nothing now but our lands." *Hinc illæ lachrymæ.*

The clamour of these "Citizens in the *Christian* Interest" at length prevailed, and the Parliament was constrained to repeal the *Act* "whereby any person professing the *Jewish* religion" might "be *naturalized*, without first receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper."

the guilt was contracted in a remote period, and, consequently, the punishment falls upon the innocent. Of this we have many instances in the scripture history. The judgments pronounced against *Jeroboam*, *Baasha*, and *Ahab*, did not fall upon themselves, but upon their posterity in the fourth generation. *Joash*, the great grandson of *Ahab*, was slain in the field of *Naboth*, as Ahab's own blood was licked by dogs in the same place. The sufferings of the Jews at this day were occasioned by their sins and apostacy in very remote ages.

There are no judgments more distinctly announced than those that are to fall upon the power that is denominated *Babylon*, the *man of sin*,* and *antichrist*, which all Protestants interpret, and I doubt not very justly, of the popes and the Church of Rome. But whenever those judgments take place, (and the time is perhaps near,) it is almost certain that the actual pope, and the court of Rome in general, will be much less deserving of punishment than many preceding popes, and former courts of Rome.

We must be content to wait till the plan of Divine Providence be more clearly unfolded, before we can form any proper judgment concerning it. In time we shall, I doubt not, be convinced that any other mode of proceeding would have been less productive of happiness on the whole. If so, the present measures must be pronounced wise and good; and if *benevolence* be satisfied, *justice* will have no reason to complain.

In the mean time, considering these very imperfect views of things, it becomes us to look principally to our own sentiments and conduct, and to be careful to suppress within ourselves every affection or sentiment that can, directly or indirectly, lead to persecution, whether of *Jews* or *Christians*, and to endeavour, as far as we can, to assist our persecuted brethren, lightening the burdens that are imposed by others. Then, whether we be preserved in general calamities, or be involved in the fate of the guilty, the time will come when a proper distinction will be made between those who now suffer justly and unjustly. But "if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" [1 *Peter* iv. 18.]

* 2 *Thess.* ii. 2. See Vol. XIV. pp. 28, 29.

DISCOURSE IX.

OF THE MIRACLES OF JESUS.

JOHN iii. 2:

Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher sent from God: for no man can do those miracles which thou doest, except God be with him.

IT is not a little remarkable, that from the time of the Captivity in *Babylon*, to that of Christ, a period of six hundred years, there did not appear among the Jews any person who pretended to work a miracle; nor was there among them any one who pretended to the gift of prophecy from the time of *Malachi*, which was about four hundred years before Christ. This is a sufficient proof that the Jews were not a credulous nation. For had they been disposed to believe in miracles, or prophecy, persons enow would have arisen to take advantage of that disposition, as was the case with the *Catholics* for many centuries. In proportion to the credulity of some, have always been the arts of imposition in others. This remarkable fact demonstrates a general dread in the Jewish nation of assuming the phophetic character without authority. Whatever liberties of other kinds they might take with respect to morality, this species of impiety was not among them.

From these circumstances it may be taken for granted, that pretensions to miracles among Jews were sure of being rigorously scrutinized, so that they would not obtain credit unless the facts were indisputable. This would have been the case had the object of the miracles even been any thing favourable to their religion, and to their wishes; but much more so if it had been any thing that they did not wish to favour. And in this predicament was Jesus when he first assumed the character of a person sent from God, and impowered to work miracles, in proof of his divine mission.

The only person whom the Jews expected in the character of a prophet, preceded by *Elijah*, they also expected in the character of a king, viz. their promised *Messiah*, the person announced under that title by *Daniel*, [vii. 13,] as *to come in the clouds of heaven*, with power and great glory. And it is remarkable that about the time of the appearance

of Jesus, there was a general expectation of the speedy coming of this Messiah. But they naturally imagined that he would be a great prince, who would rescue their nation from their subjection to the Romans, and bring all the world into subjection to them.

Had any person assumed *this* character, it is not impossible but that the Jewish nation, prejudiced as they were, might have been disposed to favour his pretensions, and have been less scrupulous in their examination of the proofs of his mission. But Jesus made no such pretensions. He never, indeed, denied that he was the Messiah; but his appearance by no means corresponded to their ideas of him. He did not *come in the clouds;* and so far was he from assuming kingly power or state, that he was brought up a common carpenter; he chose his companions from persons of an equally low rank with himself; and he declined all particular intercourse with the chiefs of his nation. Besides the meanness of his parentage and education, the place of his nativity (at least that from which he received his denomination) was a despicable town in *Galilee*, a part of the country which was thought meanly of, compared with Judea properly so called.

The only advantage that Jesus, previous to his appearing in a public character, had, was his being announced by *John the Baptist*, as a great prophet, one much greater than himself, and one who would work miracles. For this seems to be implied in his saying, [*Matt.* iii. 11,] that *he would baptize with the Holy Spirit.* This circumstance would, no doubt, excite great attention to Jesus, and a favourable one; and had he appeared in the character that they confidently expected their promised *Messiah* would assume, he might with somewhat more ease have imposed upon them. But this advantage only respected the common people, who regarded *John* as a true prophet. By the chief priests and rulers of the nation, to whom John had paid no court, he was regarded in a much less favourable light. Nothing, therefore, that John had said or done, would dispose them to give Jesus a more favourable reception; but, on the contrary, would lead them to regard him with a jealous eye. And this jealousy was soon inflamed to hatred and the blackest malignity, though he performed miracles which they could not deny to be such, as soon as he appeared, like John, to pay no court to *them*, but on the contrary, openly to expose their hypocrisy and other vices, and to denounce the judgments of God against them. In this state of open

opposition to all persons in possession of power, and also to all the learned and most intelligent persons in the country, the conduct of Jesus would, no doubt, be most narrowly watched; and any thing in him looking like artifice, could not fail to have been exposed, and he would have been punished as an impostor and a blasphemer.

Notwithstanding these deep-rooted prejudices, and these great disadvantages, the miracles of Jesus were so numerous, and so conspicuous, that no doubt was entertained of them. Great numbers openly avowed themselves to be his disciples, and even received him as their promised *Messiah;* and they whose prejudices would not suffer them to acknowledge *this*, did not deny his miracles, but ascribed them to some other cause than the power of God.

Let us, then, consider the circumstances of miracles which produced so wonderful an effect; and we shall find that, extraordinary as it was, the cause was equal to it. The miracles were so circumstanced, that it was impossible to suspect that there was any imposition in the case. As *Nicodemus* acknowledged, [*John* iii. 2,] *no man could have done the things that Jesus did, if God had not been with him.*

1. The number of the miracles performed by Jesus was beyond all example in any preceding time, even those of *Moses* and *Elijah*, if we except the standing miracle of the descent of the manna, which was repeated every day (excepting the *sabbath)* during forty years. Now an impostor, so narrowly watched as Jesus must have known himself to be, and without assistants, as he must have been at least at the first, would never have attempted so many miracles, from the certainty of his being detected in some of them, though he should have succeeded in others; and a single failure would have been sufficient to expose the whole scheme.

Notwithstanding this, Jesus appears never to have omitted a single opportunity of performing the benevolent miracle of curing diseases of every kind, whoever applied to him for that purpose. With artful management, a single person, or a few persons, might appear to be blind, or lame, and suddenly to recover their sight, or the use of their limbs, when commanded so to do; but Jesus made no exception to any kind of disease; and what is much more extraordinary, any *maim*, or the total want of any limb. This was far too bold for the most artful and practised impostor to have undertaken. That so impudent an attempt as this should have succeeded, in such peculiarly unfavourable circumstances, and to the extent that all history, and the

present state of things, shews that it did succeed, would be a greater miracle than any that are recorded by the evangelists.

It is probable that but few of the miracles performed by Jesus, are recorded in the histories we have of him. All the evangelists allude to great numbers not specified by them, and they seem to have selected only the more remarkable of them: yet in the history of little more than one year, (for the public ministry of Jesus did not extend beyond this short period,) they particularly mention the following, probably only as more distinguished by their circumstances than the rest. Of *lepers*, mention is made [*Matt.* viii. 3, 4] of one who met him at the foot of the mountain on which he had delivered the discourse of which we have an account, in *Matthew* and *Luke;* and [*Luke* xvii. 11—19] of ten who applied to him at the same time, one of whom was a *Samaritan.* Of a *fever* he cured Peter's wife's mother at *Capernaum*, [*Matt.* viii. 15; *Luke* iv. 39,] and a nobleman's son of the same place, when he was at a distance. [*John* iv. 46—53.] Of *blind* men there was one whom he met near *Bethsaida;* [*Mark* viii. 22;] another, who had been blind from his birth, at *Jerusalem;* [*John* ix. 1;] and two near to *Jericho.* [*Matt.* xx. 30—34.] Of the *palsy* he cured a centurion's servant at *Capernaum*, before he came to the house. [*Matt.* viii. 13.] Another *paralytic* person was brought to him on a bed, and let down through the roof of the house where he was; [*Mark* ii. 3—5;] and one person he cured of a *withered* hand in a synagogue on a sabbath day. [*Matt.* xii. 10—13.]

Of *demoniacs*, or insane persons, he cured one in a synagogue at *Capernaum*, [*Mark* i. 26,] the miracle which first excited the particular attention of the public to him; another who was raging mad, and wholly intractable, in *Gadara;* [*Mark* v. 2—15;] another who, besides being insane, was both blind and dumb, [*Matt.* xii. 22,] presently after the calling of the twelve apostles. In this case he also relieved the daughter of a *Syrophœnician* woman; [*Mark* vii. 29;] and another young person at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration. [*Matt.* xvii. 18.] And incidental mention is made of his having cured *Mary Magdalene*, who had been grievously afflicted in this way, as it is said that *seven demons* had been cast out of her.*

He instantly cured a woman who had a bloody issue of

* *Mark* xvi. 9. "Celsus *(apud Origen cont. Cels.* p. 96) calls her *a distracted woman*, referring to this account." *Farmer on Demon.* Ch. i. Sect. iv. p. 62.

many years' continuance, as he was going to the house of Jairus in Capernaum; [*Matt.* ix. 22;] another woman, who had been infirm eighteen years, in a public synagogue; [*Luke* xiii. 11—13;] a lame man at the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem; [*John* v. 8, 9;] one who was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech, on his return from his excursion to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon; [*Mark* vii. 35;] a person who had a dropsy, at the house of a chief Pharisee, *Luke* xiv. 1—4; and he cured the wound made by *Peter* in striking off the ear of the *high-priest's* servant. [*Luke* xxii. 50, 51; *John* xviii. 10.]

But more astonishing than the cure of any disease was his raising persons from the dead, of whom three are particularly mentioned, viz. the daughter of *Jairus* at *Capernaum*, [*Matt.* ix. 25,] the widow's son at *Nain*, [*Luke* vii. 14, 15,] and *Lazarus* at *Bethany*. [*John* xi. 43, 44.]

Besides these miracles of healing, there were others of a benevolent nature, as his changing a quantity of water into wine, at a marriage feast in *Cana;* [*John* ii. 7—11;] and his feeding first five thousand, [*Matt.* xiv. 21,] and afterwards four thousand, [*Ch.* xv. 38,] with a small quantity of provisions.

All the miracles of Jesus were not, however, of this kind. Some of them seem calculated to shew his power over nature in general, as his stilling a tempest, [*Matt.* viii. 26,] his walking on the sea, [*Ch.* xiv. 25,] his enabling *Peter* to do the same, [*ver.* 31,] and his causing a barren fig-tree to wither in the course of a night. [*Mark* xi. 14, 20.]

Other miracles are recorded in the history of Jesus, in which he does not appear to have been the agent, as in the voices from heaven, of which there were three instances; the first at his baptism, probably in the hearing of many persons, when the following words were distinctly pronounced: [*Matt.* iii. 17:] "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." The same words were pronounced on the Mount of Transfiguration, [*Matt.* xvii. 5,] in the hearing of *Peter*, *James*, and *John*. The last was in the Temple, when, in answer to his prayer in which he said, "Father, glorify thy name," [*John* xii. 28,] the supernatural voice said, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."*

Some of the miracles of Jesus, if they may be so called, were of a *prophetical* nature, as his telling *Peter* where he should find a large draught of fishes, [*Luke* v. 4,] and a piece

* See Vol. VIII. pp. 18, 19.

of money in a fish's mouth; [*Matt.* xvii. 27;] his telling his disciples where they should find an ass on which he might ride to Jerusalem, [*Ch.* xxi. 2,] and a person who should shew them a proper place where he might eat his last passover; [*Ch.* xxvi. 18;] but especially his wonderfully exact prediction concerning the destruction of *Jerusalem* and the Temple, to take place within that generation. [*Ch.* xxiv. 34.] To these may be added his foretelling the powers that would be conferred on his apostles, and their success in preaching the gospel.

All these miracles, however, extraordinary as they are, were as nothing in comparison of the prediction of Jesus concerning his own death and resurrection, within a limited time, together with his ascension above the clouds, in the presence of a great number of his disciples.

What kind of a man must he have been, to have undertaken all this, in the circumstances in which Jesus was, without any consciousness of supernatural assistance, and depending only upon his art and address? Certainly he could not have been in the possession of his right mind, and therefore his impudent pretensions would soon have been exposed, and he would have suffered as an impostor. Let any man at this day, a man the most practised in the arts of imposture, undertake a hundredth part of what Jesus did, and see what would be his fate; and it would have been infinitely more hazardous in the case of Jesus among the Jews.

2. The cures that Jesus undertook to perform, which was always *immediately*, were, in general, of such a nature, that there was the least prospect of present relief, as fevers, palsies, leprosy, dropsy, blindness, and especially insanity. For when these cases are curable by medical treatment, it is always in a course of time, and never suddenly; and in no case was the cure left imperfect, so as to require a second application. Even when the daughter of *Jairus* was raised to life, she was not left in a languishing condition, so as to require time for her perfect recovery, but was immediately capable of eating. The young man whom Jesus restored to life as they were carrying him to his grave, immediately rose up, and he delivered him to his mother; and Lazarus, who had lain in the grave four days, was loosed, and his *being let go*, implied his being capable of walking. In all the cases, therefore, the persons were not only recovered from a state of death, but restored to health and vigour.

3. The scale, as I may say, on which several of the

miracles of Jesus were performed, was much too large to admit the suspicion of artifice. This more especially applies to the case of feeding the five, and the four thousand, and, in a great degree, to the changing so great a quantity of water, much more than any man could carry, into wine. No impostor would have attempted any thing of the kind. To substitute a single glass of wine for one of water, or as much bread, or any kind of eatable, as a man could carry about him, and for a time conceal, might be practicable; but to provide wine for a large company, and bread and fish to suffice several thousand persons, and those after they had long fasted, and this in a desert, in the open air, where no such supply could either have been procured or secreted, was beyond all the power of *legerdemain*. Besides, it is evident from the whole story, which is related with the most perfect simplicity, that Jesus had no assistants; the apostles themselves having no knowledge of what he intended, and expressing their surprise at his proposal, in the most artless manner.

4. It is equally evident that, in the greater part of his miracles, Jesus could not have availed himself of any assistance, and that there could not have been any collusion between him and the persons on whom he operated. The diseased persons were usually presented to him as they happened to come in his way, and the cures were frequently performed in the presence of enemies, who would be attentive, we cannot doubt, to every circumstance that could afford any handle for suspicion.

The man who had been blind from his birth was known to have been so by his parents, whose testimony was extorted from them in a court of judicature. Of the ten lepers who were cured at one time, nine did not so much as return to give him thanks; whereas an impostor would, no doubt, have engaged them all, not only to return, but to accompany him in his future progress, as trophies of his power; but in no one instance was this the case with Jesus. In him there was nothing of that ostentation which is inseparable from the character of an impostor, who would naturally endeavour to make the most of every feat that he could contrive to exhibit with success. The *demoniacs* that Jesus restored to the use of their understanding, had, in general, been long known to all the neighbourhood to have been really insane, and incurably so, especially that in *Gadara*.

Can it be supposed that the young daughter of *Jairus*,

the widow's son, (in a place where Jesus was, to all appearance, a perfect stranger,) or *Lazarus*, who had been in his grave four days, many mourners from Jerusalem, evidently no friends of Jesus, attending all the time, only counterfeited death, to favour his views?* In the last case Jesus was at a considerable distance when Lazarus died, and the whole history is so circumstantially and naturally related, as to vouch for its own truth. Besides, in the presence of so many enemies, what could the assistance of his apostles, had they been on the spot from the beginning, have availed him?

How could Jesus have contrived, by any assistants, to produce a voice that should appear to come from heaven, with the farther appearance of *the heavens opening*, and something lighting upon his head? And, though on one of the occasions of a voice from heaven, Jesus was in the Temple, it could not, at the most, have been more than under a portico; and as the place was always crowded, and the different apartments above him, or any where else, were not at his disposal, any attempt at an imposition, in such a place as this, must have been desperate in the extreme.

But that there was no collusion between Jesus and the apostles, is most evident from the history of *Judas*, who betrayed him to his enemies. If there had been any collusion, he must have been privy to it, or have seen reason to suspect it; for, as far as appears, he had the same opportunity of knowing the secrets of the little fraternity as any other of the company, and yet he not only acknowledged the perfect innocence of Jesus, but, from remorse for what he had done, went and hanged himself.†

5. With respect to many of the miracles of Jesus, it is evident that no human assistance could have availed him at all, as in stilling the tempest, walking on the sea, and causing the barren fig-tree to wither in a night. No knowledge that we *now* have of the powers of nature could encourage any person to attempt any thing of the kind, especially the two first.

It may, indeed, be said that the man with his ass, or with the pitcher of water, might have been in the places where the disciples would find them, by particular appointment; but this could not have been the case with the fish that had the piece of money in its mouth. And how could

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 95—97, 105—108, 264—267.

† See Vol. VIII. p. 20; Vol. XIII. pp. 302—304, 306—308, 344, 345.

Jesus have so peremptorily foretold Peter's denial of him, contrary to his own fixed resolution? Will any one say that, when the lives of both were in such imminent danger, they had agreed to say and do what they did? But more especially, by what human means of any kind could Jesus have been enabled to foretell so particularly as he did the fate of *Judea*, *Jerusalem*, and the Temple, forty years before the event, when no other person had any apprehensions of the kind? The modern Jews pretend that he did it by his interpretation of the prophecy of *Daniel*. But how came Jesus to be more sagacious in the interpretation of prophecy than even the most learned Jews, the Scribes and Pharisees of his time?

I shall now make a few observations of a more general nature, on the improbability of such men as Jesus, and his first followers, being impostors. If we only consider their condition and education, we may be convinced that they were by no means likely to come within the influence of such *ambition* as would have been necessary to their undertaking so complicated a piece of imposture as they are charged with. They were, with few exceptions, and those not of the most conspicuous among them, men of low and laborious, though not of ignoble occupations. Also the youngest of them was probably above thirty, which was the case of Jesus himself. Peter, who took the lead among them, was probably much older; consequently, they were men who had acquired habits of industry. They had also some little property, for they could make a merit of abandoning it when they became the followers of Jesus, [*Mark* x. 28,] and they were evidently sober and pious men. They were men who had had no commerce with the more elevated and splendid part of the world, so as to be fascinated by its charms; nor were they instigated to make desperate attempts to repair ruined fortunes, which is the case with most adventurers.

Neither Jesus, nor any of his associates, had any more knowledge of nature or philosophy than their neighbours; nor were they men of superior ability; and from their ignorance of the world, they were little likely to think of ever going beyond the bounds of their own country. What figure could a carpenter, followed by fishermen or husbandmen, expect to make even in *Jerusalem*, and much less in the principal cities of the *Roman* empire, where, after the death of Jesus, we chiefly find them, such as *Antioch*, *Ephesus*, *Athens*, *Corinth*, and *Rome* itself?

For men in their originally low situation and scanty knowledge, and who, as Jews, could not but know that they laboured under greater disadvantage than persons of any other nation, to entertain the idea of making such a revolution in the world as they actually effected, and which they would soon find could not take place to any purpose till long after their deaths, must have been insanity in the extreme. It was to undertake to do, without superior ability or superior means, what the greatest philosophers in the most learned nations had not attempted: viz. to persuade men to abandon the rites of their religion, absurd, indeed, but what they had received from their ancestors, and which had been derived to them from the most remote antiquity, and on the observance of which they imagined the prosperity of their several states depended. The scheme of persuading even their countrymen to abandon the flattering idea of a conquering *Messiah*, an idea which, it is evident, the apostles themselves did not give up without the greatest reluctance, was sufficiently extravagant, without looking any farther; and yet Jesus himself, a working carpenter, as no doubt he was, must have originally formed these great ideas.

That Jesus was not a man of much acquired knowledge, is certain, and that he had any extraordinary share of natural sagacity or ability, does not appear. In curing diseases he did not pretend to understand more of the nature and causes of them than any other person. This applies to the case of *demoniacs* as well as any other. And his language shews that he was under the same mistake with respect to this disease, as the rest of his countrymen, supposing insane persons to be really possessed by *demons*.*

* "The Jews seem to have received some additional notions concerning evil spirits, and their operations, from the Chaldeans. *Lightfoot* says, 'Judæis usitatissimum erat morbos quosdam graviores, eos præsertim, quibus distortum erat corpus, vel mens turbata et agitata phrenesi, malis spiritibus attribuere.' *Hor. Hebr.* Hence those swarms of Energumens and Exorcists, mentioned in Ecclesiastical History." Jortin's *Remarks*, 1751, I. pp. 243, 244.

Dr. Priestley's view of this subject, though well according with the evangelical history, and the scriptural limitation of our Lord's *universal knowledge* to the purposes of his divine mission, has not been generally entertained by those Christians who have disbelieved the reality of *possessions*. Thus *Lardner*, after concluding "that the notion of possessions was received by the Jews, from the Chaldean or Greek philosophers," and "that the evangelists seem to have believed real possessions," yet maintains that "undoubtedly our blessed Lord knew the truth of the case, for he knew all things," though "it does not follow that he was, therefore, obliged to speak his mind, or to correct every false and mistaken notion

That such men as the apostles, on seeing a man work miracles, and especially a man of exemplary piety and goodness, as Jesus was, and then entertain an idea that he was the *Messiah* their nation expected, and that, on being called upon to attend him constantly, they should imagine that some great thing was intended for them in his kingdom, and be induced to leave their low occupations with a view to such advancement, is perfectly natural. No man is wholly without the desire of bettering his condition, when he has a fair and reasonable prospect of doing it; and here piety and ambition would unite to make them become the followers of Jesus.

But that such plain men as these should enter into a league with a man no way superior to themselves; that they should either be deceived by him, or join with him in a scheme to deceive the world, and, with the poor chance of succeeding in this, abandon the employments by which they had long subsisted, and, for persons in their condition, reputably, to the age of about forty; that they should agree to make him their head, and implicitly act by his orders; that when he was cut off by an ignominious death, they should pretend that he rose from the dead, and even still continue to act as by his instructions, and persist in this scheme without any consciousness of superior powers, and without any resource but in their own artifices, through the whole of a painful life, and many of them die in torment, without the rest being at all discouraged, and without confessing the imposture, exceeds any thing that we read of insanity in the history of mankind. And that such men as these should eventually succeed in their wild scheme, is altogether incredible. When we see, not only undertaken, but actually carried into execution, things evidently above the power of the visible agents, it is natural and philosophical to attribute the effect to invisible agents. If the powers of *man* be unequal to the effect, we must have recourse to powers *superhuman*, for every effect must have an adequate cause.

In fact, that such men as Jesus and the apostles should either form such a scheme as that of *the regeneration of the world*, (for Christianity pretends to nothing less,) when it

among the people whom he taught." *Works*, I. pp. 461, 462, 482, 483. See *Beausobre* (N. T. p. 14); *ibid.* p. 483, *Note; Farmer* "on the language of Christ and his apostles, in performing and recording the cure of demoniacs." *Demon.* Ch. ii. Sect. iii. pp. 186—230.

required ages to effect it, and should finally succeed in it, notwithstanding all the obstacles that lay in their way, is something more extraordinary, more out of the course of nature, and therefore more properly miraculous, than any thing recorded in the gospels, and, consequently, less credible.

If we consider the first disciples of Jesus as *writers*, their conduct will appear as unaccountable as when they are considered as engaged in a scheme by which they could have so little prospect of imposing upon the world, and with a certainty, as they would soon find, of meeting with every kind of ill usage, and frequently dying a violent death.

They were not men of education, and probably had read nothing besides the sacred books of the Jews; consequently, if they be supposed to have been persons who formed to themselves the idea of the character and history of Jesus as a prophet, they would, no doubt, have made it to resemble that of their ancient prophets, for they had no other models to follow; and if they had meant to recommend their work to Jews, no other would have appeared likely to answer their purpose. Now, all the ancient prophets bore a great resemblance to each other, and *John the Baptist* very much resembled them in that austerity which was common to them all; and this circumstance, no doubt, contributed to his good reception among his countrymen.

But the character of Jesus was a great original, exceedingly different from that of any former prophet. His general manners were pleasing, he easily mixed with the world, and occasionally partook of its enjoyments. This so much offended his countrymen, that they reproached him with it. Was this, then, a circumstance that an inventor would have adopted with a view to recommend the character to *Jews?*

Jesus's manner of discoursing and working miracles were, in many respects, new. *Parables* are not frequent in the *Old Testament*, but they constitute a great part of the discourses of Jesus. Preceding prophets worked miracles but rarely, on particular occasions, and often with great preparation. But they occur so frequently in the history of Jesus, though a history of little more than a year, that, with respect to number, they were probably equal to all that had been performed before from the beginning of the world. His manner also of working miracles was peculiar

to himself. It seemed as if they were acts fully within his own power, though it sufficiently appears, both by his declarations, and his manner occasionally, that the power by which they were performed was not his own.

In other respects, also, the character and manner of Jesus were so different from those of any of the preceding Jewish prophets, that they who were not writers by profession, and had no other models to follow, cannot be supposed to have thought of it. Had their view been to impose on the Jews a *Messiah*, and not merely a prophet, they were still more unfortunate; for certainly no Jew ever formed such an idea of their Messiah as the evangelists have exhibited.

But it is evident, from the bare perusal of the gospels, that the evangelists were no inventors, or capable of being so. They merely relate what they had seen and heard, and this they do without the least ornament or ostentation; contenting themselves with relating facts, and leaving it to others to draw conclusions and characters from them. No other books bear so many unequivocal marks of being genuine narratives of facts, or carry so much of their own evidence along with them.

DISCOURSE X.

OF THE MIRACLES OF THE APOSTLES.

ACTS ii. 43:

And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

WE have seen how the age of miracles, which ceased at the *Babylonish* Captivity, was, after an interruption of *six hundred* years, (in which we find no pretension to any such thing,) revived by Jesus, in circumstances in which it was absolutely impossible for him, or for any man, to have imposed upon those before whom they were exhibited.

We have seen how a man, of no higher rank than a common carpenter, with fishermen, and other persons of no greater estimation, for his companions, with the jealousy and hatred of all persons in power, or eminent for knowledge, to contend with, went about publicly curing all sick persons, under whatever disease they laboured, even

insanity, whenever they presented themselves; raising several persons from the dead, and performing various other miracles, of the most astonishing kind; such as twice feeding a great multitude with a small quantity of provisions; stilling a tempest, and walking on the sea. His divine mission was also attested by voices from heaven, but more especially by his resurrection from the dead, after a public crucifixion, and in such other circumstances with respect to its credibility, that it does not seem possible to imagine any others which could have so effectually ensured the belief of it in distant ages.

So important, however, in the eye of Providence was the credibility of the gospel history, in all future ages, that the scene of miracles was not closed with the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. The same spirit or power by which Jesus worked miracles was transferred to the apostles, and other disciples of Jesus, and continued with them, as far as appears, through life, though it probably terminated with that generation. This *effusion of the Spirit*, as it may be called, was promised by Jesus to his apostles, when he assured them, (*John* xiv. 12,) that after he should leave them, they should do even greater things than he had done; and before his ascension he directed them [*Luke* xxiv. 49] to *wait, in Jerusalem*, till they should be "endued with power from on high." This promise began to be fulfilled on the following *Pentecost*, [*Acts* ii. 4,] about ten days after his ascension.

On the death of Jesus, all his disciples were, as might have been expected, from their having no idea of any such event, thrown into the greatest consternation, and dispersed. Believing him to be the *Messiah*, they had flattered themselves that he would, at a proper time, assume what they took to be the proper character of that high office, and appear as a king. But on his death, all their hopes were blasted: nor can it be imagined, on any principles consistent with our knowledge of human nature, that they would ever have appeared in public, avowing themselves to be his disciples, and acting as by authority from him, and continue to do so through life, in the face of danger and of death, unless they had been fully persuaded of the truth of his resurrection, and had actually received the powers that had been promised them; and with respect to neither of them could they have been deceived themselves; but with this supposition, their conduct, and all the following history of the planting of Christianity, is perfectly con-

sistent; for they acted as men naturally would do in those new and peculiar circumstances.

As the history of this period is of infinite importance, it behoves us to give the closest attention to it. Though we are not in the situation of the first disciples of Jesus, exposed to persecution and death for our faith in his mission, it behove us, as men pretending to reason, and especially with respect to religion, (on which so much of our present enjoyments as well as our future prospects depend,) not to be imposed upon by fables, instead of true history, by tricks of *legerdemain*, instead of real miracles, and by the artifices of man, instead of the power of God. I shall, therefore, bring into review the particulars of the great scene that opened on the world after the death and supposed resurrection of Jesus, that we may see whether the facts correspond with the supposition of the reality of that resurrection, or not; taking it for granted that human nature was the same then that it is now, and that both they who preached Christianity, and they to whom it was preached, were men, as we are.

Had the apostles been men who knew that Jesus had been a mere impostor, and had chosen (for any reason that we cannot well imagine) to carry on the same imposture, and act in his name, rather than in their own; and had they been acquainted with his arts, it is most probable that they would at least have begun with attempting something of the same kind. But the first extraordinary narrative in their history is of something quite unlike any thing that we find in the history of Jesus, and what nothing they had seen of him, or could have learned of him, could have led them to conceive; and yet, had it been an imposition, it was the boldest that ever was thought of by the most practised cheats, and, in their circumstances, the most unlikely to succeed.

The apostles, and other disciples of Jesus, were well known to be men in the lowest ranks of life, wholly unlearned, and acquainted with no language besides their own. Of this there never was a question; and yet, when they were assembled together on the day of *Pentecost*, after "a sound *as* from heaven,—a rushing, mighty wind," and the appearance of *flames of fire* on the heads of all the company, [*Acts* ii. 2, 3,] circumstances which it was impossible for them to have produced by art, they all began to speak distinctly and intelligibly in various languages, many of which had no affinity to each other, and yet they were

perfectly understood by the natives of all those countries who were present. [*Vers.* 4, 11.] The amazement of these persons, who had resorted to Jerusalem from the most distant parts of the world, is expressed in the most natural manner. *Acts* ii. 5—12: "There were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded; because every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak, Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born, Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Syrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and Proselytes, Cretes and Arabians; we do hear them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?"

Now I do not think it is possible to imagine any fact more decisively miraculous than this. Had it been only one foreign language that these men had undertaken to speak so suddenly, it might have been possible that, having prepared themselves beforehand, and assisted one another, they might, in some measure, have succeeded. But the scale on which this miracle was performed, was much too great for the purpose of imposture; for by one or other of the company every known language was spoken, and persons to whom the languages were native, were judges of their speaking them correctly, and by no means predisposed to make a report in favour of the speakers.

The effect corresponded to this wonderful event. Had there been any trick in it, it would soon have been exposed. But some, who understood not the languages, saying, [*Acts* ii. 13,] that those who spake them were drunk, *Peter* addressed them in so forcible a manner on the subject of the death and resurrection of Jesus, of which all the company present declared themselves witnesses, that three thousand persons [*ver.* 41] immediately avowed themselves converts, and were baptized. The manner in which Peter spake concerning Jesus and his miracles, the particulars of which he had no occasion to enumerate, or to bring any proof of, as being well known to all present, is remarkable, and such as no impostor would have ventured upon. *Acts*

ii. 22, 23, 32: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God, among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him, in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know; him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.—This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses."

Was it possible to have made so many converts, if either the fact of speaking with unknown tongues, or the miracles of Jesus, so confidently appealed to, could have been disputed? And the effect of this address upon the people in general, who did not choose to be baptized, and thus publicly join themselves to the society of Christians, corresponded to the truth of it. *Acts* ii. 43: "Fear came upon every soul." As to the faith of the professed disciples, who were greatly increased, it appeared by its fruits to be of the firmest kind. *Vers.* 41, 42, 44—47: "Then they that gladly received *the* word, were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.—And all that believed were together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every *one* had need. And they continued daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

Such was the great and singular miracle by which the truth of Christianity was first attested, after the ascension of Jesus; and this species of miracle was not confined to this memorable day, but continued to be a standing miracle in the Christian church, probably during the life-time of the apostles; so that there was sufficient opportunity of examining the reality of it. It was, by way of eminence, denominated *the gift of the Spirit*, and was always conferred on the disciples by the laying on of the hands of the apostles, being the only miracle that may be said to have been, in a manner, in their own power. The apostle *Paul*, writing to the *Corinthians*, speaks of it as well known to, and seemingly experienced by most of them, as exercised in his absence, and a great cause of ostentation with many of them. [1 *Cor.* xii.] Writing to the *Galatians*, (*Ch.* iii. 2,)

he appeals to this gift of the Spirit as given to them in consequence of the preaching of the gospel, and not any thing that they derived from their observance of the law of Moses; and yet, both in the *Corinthian* church and among the *Galatians*, there were many who undervalued this apostle, and who were desirous to set up themselves and others above him. Would he, then, have dared to appeal, in his vindication, to a fact that was known to have no foundation? It is what no man in his senses would have done.

The history of the promulgation of Christianity by the apostles, does not appear to be so crowded with miracles as that of Jesus, if we except the above-mentioned standing miracle of *the gift of tongues*, which seems to have been imparted to almost all the converts. But the public ministry of Jesus was of a short duration, and that of the apostles was of many years' continuance. It is probable, also, that, as was the case with respect to Jesus, only the more remarkable of the cases are recorded. But these deserve particular attention, being such as no impostors would have ventured upon, especially the first, [*Acts* iii. 2—7,] which was the instantaneous and perfect cure of a man who had been lame from his birth, and who was then "above forty years old." [*Ch.* iv. 22.] It is probable, also, that he had been the greatest part of his life accustomed to beg at the gate of the Temple, so that no case of real and incurable lameness could well have been better known.

When this man asked alms of Peter and John, as he did of others, when they were about to go into the Temple, Peter, no doubt feeling a divine impulse, said to him, *Acts* iii. 6—8, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have, give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk; and, *taking him by the hand, he instantly leaped up*, stood, and walked, and entered with them into the Temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God;" and this in the presence of a great crowd of people.

Such an event as this naturally brought together a great concourse of people, and *Peter* took the opportunity of addressing them, as before, on the subject of the death of Jesus and his resurrection; of which he again declared himself and his associates to be witnesses; and said that it was not by any virtue or power of their own, but by faith in him, that this miracle had been performed. [*Acts* iii. 12—16.] He farther assured them, that though Jesus was ascended into heaven, he would return at "the time of

the restitution of all things" spoken of by the prophets. [*Ver.* 21.]

This miracle, followed by this proper address, produced a great addition to the number of professed disciples, who now amounted to five thousand men. What put the reality of the miracle past all dispute, was the behaviour of the great council of the nation upon this occasion; for *Peter* and *John* being called to appear before them, for preaching in so public a manner, they boldly declared, that the miracle was performed *in the name of Jesus of Nazareth*, whom they had crucified, but whom God had raised from the dead; and the man who had been lame being present, they had nothing to reply. They therefore contented themselves with threatening them, and charging them not to preach any more in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John openly refused to obey such an order, declaring that they would obey God rather than man. The embarrassment and the whole conduct of these magistrates can only be accounted for by supposing the truth of the fact. The story is also told with the greatest simplicity. *Acts* iv. 13—22: "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled, and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. And beholding the man who was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. But when they had commanded them to go aside, out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these men? For that, indeed, a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But, that it spread no farther among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered, and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you, rather than unto God, judge ye; for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. So when they had farther threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people; for all men glorified God for that which was done; for the man was above forty years old on whom this miracle of healing was shewed." This public miracle was, more than any other, in proof of the divine mission and resur-

rection of Jesus, and nothing could have been more unexceptionable and decisive.

The presence of God with the apostles was awfully witnessed in the deaths of *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, who would have imposed upon them with respect to the price of a possession which they had sold, and pretended to have wholly given to the common stock of the church. [*Acts* v. 1—11.] Upon this it is said, *vers.* 12, 15, 16, "By the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people,—insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that, at least, the shadow of Peter passing by, might overshadow some of them. There came also a multitude out of the cities round about Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them that were vexed with unclean spirits, and they were healed every one."

Upon this, *the high-priest* and the rulers of the nation were, as might have been expected, more exasperated than ever; and still hoping to subdue them by terror, they "put them in the common prison," *Acts* v. 18; but in the night they were miraculously set at liberty; and when they were sent for, to appear before the council, the judges were informed that they were *teaching in the Temple.* And the officers who had been sent to conduct them into the court said, *ver.* 23, "The prison truly found we shut with all safety,—but when we had opened, we found no man within." And presently other persons came, and said, "Behold the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the Temple, and teaching the people." [*Ver.* 25.]

The magistrates being utterly confounded at this, and not knowing what farther to do, contented themselves with threatening them as before, and charging them not to preach any more to the people. But *Peter* and the other apostles, having these evident tokens of the presence of God with them, answered as before, and said, *Acts* v. 29, "We ought to obey God rather than men." They also boldly repeated their testimony to the divine mission and resurrection of Jesus. [*Vers.* 30, 31.]

After this, these magistrates thought to put the apostles to death, as they had done Jesus; but in consequence of the prudent advice of *Gamaliel*, one of their body, they only ordered them to be beaten, and again charged them to preach no more in the name of Jesus. *Acts* v. 33—40. This, however, was far from having the intended effect; for we read, *vers.* 41, 42, that "they departed from the coun-

cil, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer shame for *the name of Christ*. And daily in the Temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ." What do we see in this conduct, both of the apostles and of the rulers of the nation, but the clearest evidence of the truth of the apostles' doctrine, and the impotence of civil power to prevent the effect of it?

I intend not to dwell on other miracles, as the cure of *Æneas*, [*Acts* ix. 34,] and the raising from death of *Tabitha*, by *Peter*, [*ver.* 40,] his second miraculous deliverance from prison, where he was confined by *Herod;* [*Acts* xii. 6—11;] or many that occur in the history of *Paul*, as, though all tending in a general way to shew the presence of a divine power with the apostles, they had only local effects. But the circumstances attending the conversion of Paul himself are deserving of very particular notice.

It has often been said by unbelievers, that the truth of the facts on which Christianity is founded, is not attested by unbelieving *Jews* or *Heathens;* but it has appeared that the facts were not denied by the most inveterate enemies of Christianity in this early age, not even by the Jewish rulers, who persecuted the apostles, and would have put them to death. Besides, an enemy converted by being convinced of the truth of the facts, and ascribing them to their proper cause, becomes, of course, a Christian and a friend. And the strongest attestation that can be given, is that of one who, from having been a violent enemy, becomes a friend by this fair means; and such was the case of Paul.

Had the Jewish rulers, and other the most inveterate enemies of Christianity, been assembled, and have put their conviction of the truth of it upon the conversion of any one man whatever, of their own body, and acting by their direction, it would probably have been Paul, who was a most bigotted Jew, a Pharisee, and a most open enemy of the Christian name. It was probably he who procured the death of *Stephen*, as he is said [*Acts* viii. 1] to have *consented to his death*, and to have *kept the clothes of them that stoned him*. [*Ch.* vii. 58.] It is farther said of him, *Ch.* viii. 3, 4, that he "made havoc of the church, entering every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison;" so that the disciples "were scattered abroad," and went to preach in distant places. But even thus they did not escape his pursuit. We read, *Ch.* ix. 1, 2, that, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the

disciples," he, of his own accord, "went unto the high-priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus, to the synagogues; that, if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem."

The conversion, therefore, of such a man as this, was the greatest and the clearest triumph that the Christian cause could have. His passions, and no doubt his interest too, impelled him to persist in his violence. And having, no doubt, heard all that had been alleged by the apostles and other Christians, it was not easy to say what could give his mind a different impression. And yet this was effected, and though suddenly, so completely, that he ever after promoted the cause of Christianity with as much zeal as ever he had persecuted it. Nay, he bore every kind of persecution himself about thirty years, and at length died a martyr to his new principles. His motive to this could not have been either interest or reputation; for the Christians had nothing to bribe him with, and the Christian cause at that time was in no degree of estimation with any person whose good opinion he would naturally wish to engage. On the contrary, Christianity was from the first, [*Acts* xxviii. 22,] and long after, *a sect every where spoken against.* Nothing, therefore, remained to make any impression upon his mind, but some miracle; and such he says, in his repeated account of his conversion, was the true cause of it.

As he was going to *Damascus*, in company with others, who, no doubt, went in order to assist him, and forward his scheme of persecuting the Christians whom he should find in that city, he was suddenly struck to the ground, and rendered blind, by a light from heaven, and immediately afterwards addressed by Jesus himself, who bade him proceed to Damascus, and said that he would there be informed what he should do. [*Acts* ix. 3—6.]

This was not a vision in the night, or any thing that passed when he was alone, and therefore subject to illusion, but in mid-day, and in the company of his friends; and neither himself nor they appear to have had any mistrust or misgiving about the business they went upon. His companions also heard the sound of the voice, but did not distinguish the articulation. [*Acts* ix. 7.]

In this state of blindness Paul continued three days, and then a Christian, named *Ananias*, was directed by Jesus to go to him, being assured that he had had a vision, in which he (that is, Ananias) came, and putting his hands upon him,

caused him to receive his sight. After some objection on the part of Ananias, on account of the well-known principles and conduct of Paul, he went to him; when his sight was restored, and he was baptized. As soon as he was recovered, he began to preach in the name of Christ, [*Acts* ix. 9—20,] made many converts, and devoted his whole life to it. And in this he was remarkably successful.

After this great miracle of the conversion of *Paul* himself, the miracles performed by him are comparatively of little moment, as the striking of *Elymas* blind in the presence of the governor of *Cyprus*, in consequence of which the governor was converted; [*Acts* xiii. 11, 12;] his healing a cripple at the gate of *Lystra*, which led the people of that place to imagine that he was one of the gods in the form of man; [*Ch.* xiv. 8—11;] his casting out a spirit of divination from a woman at *Philippi*, [*Ch.* xvi. 16—18,] and especially his casting out demons at *Ephesus;* [*Ch.* xix. 11, 12;] his raising *Eutychus* to life, [*Ch.* xx. 10, 12,] and his curing the father of *Publius*, the governor of *Malta*, and others in that island; [*Ch.* xxviii. 8, 9;] and himself receiving no harm from the bite of a viper in that place. [*Ver.* 5.]

The credibility of these miracles depends in part upon the testimony of the relater, who appears in many of them to have been an eye-witness, but principally upon the indisputable effects of *Paul's* preaching, as he founded several Christian churches in the places in which the miracles are said to have been performed; which could not have been the case, if the facts had not been true; the account of these transactions being published, and read in all Christian churches, while the events were recent; the continuance and flourishing state of these churches, and their constant use of this book, as well as others of the *New Testament*, are sufficient vouchers for their truth.

That there was something very extraordinary in the miracles of the apostles, and superior to any arts or tricks that were known to those who were the most practised in those things at that time, appears from the conversion, or pretended conversion, of *Simon of Samaria*, commonly called *Simon Magus*. This Simon is said, *Acts* viii. 9—11, to have been a person who "beforetime used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that *he* himself was some great one; to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of a long time he had bewitched them with *his* sorceries." Yet

this Simon *wondered, beholding the miracles that were done by Philip*, declared himself a Christian, and was baptized. And seeing that the *Holy Spirit*, or the gift of speaking in unknown tongues, was conferred by the laying on of the hands of *Peter*, he offered him money to obtain the same power; [*vers.* 18, 19;] thinking that it was the necessary consequence of some particular secret, with which he was not acquainted, and which he had no means of discovering. But Peter, with just indignation, replied, [*ver.* 20,] "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money."

The extraordinary nature of the miracles wrought by *Paul* was equally evident from the conduct of some Jews, who pretended to *exorcism*, at *Ephesus*. Seeing *demons* cast out by Paul in the name of Jesus, they thought to do the same by merely using the same words; saying to a *demoniac*, (*Acts* xix. 13,) "We adjure *thee* by Jesus whom Paul preacheth." But though they could use the words, they soon found that they were not accompanied with the same power; for the *demoniac* answered, *ver.* 15, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was, leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house, naked and wounded. And this was known to all the Jews, and Greeks also, dwelling at Ephesus. And fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified." [*Vers.* 16, 17.] Could there have been a clearer confession, and from enemies, who themselves pretended to extraordinary arts, that what was done by the apostles exceeded any powers that they were acquainted with? And yet the apostles had had no education or instruction, that could have given them this superiority. This too was the confession of the Egyptian magicians, that the miracles of Moses were performed *by the finger of God*,* whereas what *they* did was something of a different kind.

The history of the conversion of *Cornelius*, the first *Gentile* Christian, is particularly worthy of attention, especially with respect to the correspondence between the visions of Cornelius and of Peter, the one at *Cæsarea*, and the other at *Joppa*. But as it does not immediately relate to the evidence of Christianity in general, so much as to the circumstance of extending the benefits of it to the *Gentiles* as well as the

* See, on *Exod.* viii. 19, Vol. XI. p. 135, *Note.*

Jews, I do not enlarge upon it. But the manner in which Peter addressed Cornelius and his friends on that occasion, is much to my purpose, as it shews the notoriety of the great facts on which the truth of Christianity is founded. *Acts* x. 36, 37: "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ;—that word—ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached." He had no occasion to direct them to any evidence with which they were not acquainted. He took it for granted that no person could be ignorant of the facts, or require any proof of them. Paul also supposed the same in his address to *Agrippa*. *Acts* xxvi. 26: "For the king knoweth of those things, before whom also I speak freely. For I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him. For this thing was not done in a corner."

It pleased God that this exhibition of miracles should be confined to the age of the apostles, and be instrumental in the planting of Christianity. For this important purpose they were necessary. Otherwise the testimony of the apostles, and others, to the resurrection of Jesus, might not have been sufficient to insure the credibility of so very extraordinary a thing to future ages. But the evidence of the numerous miracles performed by the apostles, added to those performed by Christ, certified by common human testimony, is abundantly sufficient for the purpose. For what can any reasonable man, who must be sensible of the inconvenience of the course of nature being perpetually violated (as it must be if every man should be gratified with the sight of miracles) require farther, than that a sufficient number of persons, constituted of course as they themselves are, should have had every motive to inquire into the truth of the facts, and have been fully satisfied with respect to them; for then he could not but be convinced, that if he himself had been in their situation, he would have been satisfied as well as they. Nay, the conviction of such a number of persons, in the circumstances of the apostles and other primitive Christians, that real miracles were performed, in attestation of the facts in the gospel history, is even more satisfactory than any that could have been exhibited to himself; because he might say that his senses, or his ignorance, might be imposed upon, through some affection peculiar to himself; but that so many thousand persons, as good judges as himself, and as much interested in the discovery of the truth as

he could have been, could not have been imposed upon, without a much greater miracle than any of those to which they gave their assent.

On this firm basis, my Christian brethren, stands our faith; and surely it stands upon a rock. It only requires an unbiassed mind, and especially a freedom from those vicious dispositions and pursuits which chiefly indispose men to the duties enjoined by the gospel, to perceive its evidence, and embrace it with joy.

DISCOURSE XI.*

ON THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

1 Cor. xv. 20:

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.

We cannot imagine any question more interesting to man, than whether he shall survive the grave, so that he shall live, and especially live for ever, after he has been dead. Every question relating to our condition *here*, is of no moment at all when compared to *this*.

Nothing that we see in nature can lead us to form any such expectation. I say *expectation:* for though some appearances may lead us to indulge a *wish*, and in some persons perhaps encourage a *hope*, of another life after this, yet if we were left to the mere light of nature, it would remain improbable upon the whole; so that we could not, in this situation, die with any reasonable prospect of living again.

The constitution of man very much resembles that of other animals. They have the same senses of body, and the same faculties of mind, differing from us only in *degree;* man being more intelligent than they, and therefore capable of greater refinement in his passions and affections, and having greater comprehension of mind, so as to take into his view more of the past, and of the future, together with the present, than they can. This, however, amounts to no difference in *kind;* and the difference that we see among other animals in these respects, is as great as that which subsists

* "First delivered in the Assembly-Room at Buxton, on Sunday, September 19, 1790." The *Preface*, and *Address to the Jews*, prefixed to this *Discourse*, on its publication in 1791, will appear in a subsequent volume.

between us and the highest of them; the oyster, for example, and the elephant. Consequently, it would be natural to conclude that one fate awaits us all, the superior kinds of animals as well as the inferior, and man as well as them all. When we die, we are equally subject to corruption, and a total dissolution of the parts of which we consist, without any appearance of their ever being re-assembled, and re-arranged as they were before, or of any other being, in a new form, resulting from them. Death is a great veil, which no man can draw aside, and beyond which all is darkness.

But were it possible, by the force of any reasoning, to discover the *probability* of a future state, (and few persons will pretend that they can, by the light of nature, arrive at *certainty* with respect to it,) the reasons, whatever they were, that made so great an event probable to one, might give no satisfaction to another.

Besides, the magnitude of the question is such, and the interest we have in the solution of it is so great, that nothing but the strongest and clearest evidence could give general satisfaction with respect to it. Nothing less than a positive assurance from our Maker himself could answer this purpose. And this, (which, if any thing could be said to require it, did so,) revelation informs us, has been given, and in such a manner as must give entire satisfaction to every unprejudiced mind, *life and immortality being fully brought to light by the gospel*, as I hope to evince in the prosecution of this discourse.

It could not be expected that the Divine Being should give this assurance to every individual of the human race. It would be sufficient if it was given to some, to be communicated, with proper evidence of the fact, to others; and unless the communication was made to every person, this is all that could be done in the case: for this truth is of such a nature as to be incapable of strict or mathematical demonstration, such as that of *twice two* making *four*, but only of such proof as *historical facts* are capable of. But the evidence of a future state should not be undervalued on that account; because there are no kinds of truth of which we have a more firm persuasion than of those of the historical kind; as for example, that such a person as *Julius Cæsar* once lived at *Rome*, and that there exists at present such a city as *Constantinople*. What propositions do we believe more firmly than we do these? Now if our faith in a future life can be shewn to be as well founded as these are, it is quite sufficient for the purpose; because it will be a faith

that men will not scruple to *act* upon. They would then live as expectants of immortality, and would do nothing that should imply a doubt of a future state. That is, they would lead virtuous lives, which is the end of all religion.

In what manner God was pleased to impart to mankind the first information concerning a future life we are not now acquainted, as we have no account of it in the writings of *Moses*, or in any other writings now extant. But we see the *effect* of it in the *Jews*, who to this day are all firm believers in it; and, with a few exceptions, appear always to have believed in it. We may, therefore, presume that, in some period of time past, mankind, or at least the ancestors of the Jewish nation, had satisfactory evidence of the Divine Being having given them this assurance; because it is an idea that we cannot well suppose would ever have occurred to men themselves.

That there may be something in man that continues to exist, notwithstanding the change that takes place in him at death, *may* be imagined. But, upon that principle, man could not properly be said to *die* at all. He only continues to exist in some other form or manner. But, that man should really *die*, and, after continuing in a state of death, come to life again at a future period, that is, that there should be a proper *resurrection of the dead*, which is the faith of the *Jews* and *Christians*, (being, I must now presume, the clear doctrine of both the *Old* and the *New Testament*,) I will venture to say, must ever have appeared in the highest degree improbable, and therefore incredible. Nothing but the express assurance of the great Being who made men, could have satisfied them that he would revive them in those circumstances.

The original record of the communication of this most important truth having been lost, it pleased the Divine Being to renew it by Jesus Christ, the founder of our religion; who not only asserted the doctrine, as from God, and confirmed it by miracles, or such works as no man could have done if God had not been with him; but who himself actually died and rose again, as a proof of the reality of the thing. And this seems to have been all the evidence that mankind could have asked if the most intelligent, and the most incredulous of them, had been required to say what would satisfy them.

As Jesus rested the evidence of his divine mission, and, consequently, his authority to preach the doctrine of a future life, in a more particular manner upon his own resurrection

from the dead; and as, in all cases, examples have the greatest weight with mankind, I shall confine myself at this time to the consideration of the circumstances of his death and resurrection, shewing them to have been such as render those important events in the highest degree credible, both at the time when they took place, and, which is of much more consequence, in all future time. So that, had mankind, not only in that period, but in the most distant ages, been required to name the evidence that would give them the most satisfaction, it will appear that it has been given them; and that, in any other circumstances than the actual ones, the events would have appeared less credible than they do at present.

I shall first consider the circumstances which tend to give peculiar strength to the evidence of the resurrection of Jesus, and then reply to some objections which have been made to it. After this I shall shew, that this historical evidence of the truth of *revealed religion* proves the truth of *natural religion*, and conclude with a practical application of the doctrine.

In the first place, I shall consider the circumstances which give peculiar strength to the evidence of the resurrection of Jesus.

1. His death was not private, among his friends, but in public, and accomplished by his enemies, who, we may be sure, would not leave their own great purpose unfinished, when it was in their power completely to effect it. This we cannot doubt to have been the principal reason, in the plan of Divine Providence, why Jesus was executed as a criminal, in consequence of the sentence of a public court of justice. After this, no reasonable doubt could be entertained of the reality of his death. Accordingly, it does not appear that any doubt was entertained of it at the time, by those who were the best judges, and who were, at the same time, the most interested to dispute the fact. And this is all that we can reasonably require at this day.

It is true that Jesus expired sooner than other persons usually did in the same circumstances; but this might be owing to his having a more delicate constitution, and especially to his having been so much exhausted by his severe agony in the garden the preceding night; an agony which affected him so much that it would not have been extraordinary if he had actually died in consequence of it:* since

* See, on *Matt.* xxvii. 30, Vol. XIII. p. 361.

such consternation and terror as he appears to have been in is well known to have been, of itself, the cause of death to many persons.

The death of Jesus was so evident to the soldiers who attended the execution, and who, no doubt, (being used to the business,) were sufficient judges of the signs of death, that, concluding him to be actually dead, they did not break his bones, as they did those of the other persons who were executed along with him. One of them, however, did what was fully equivalent to it; for he thrust a spear into his side, so that blood and water evidently flowed out of the wound.* Now though we may be at a loss to account for the *water*, it was certainly impossible so to pierce the body as that *blood* should visibly, and instantly, flow from the wound, without piercing either the heart itself, or some large blood vessel, the rupture of which would have been mortal.

After this, Jesus was taken down from the cross, was swathed in spices, as the bodies of persons of distinction among the Jews usually were, was left in that state, without any appearance of life, and deposited in a cold sepulchre, where he could have no assistants to recover him, if any remains of life had been in him.† Can we, then, have any doubt of Jesus having been unquestionably dead, when both friends and enemies had no doubt at that time on the subject?

2. The circumstances of the re-appearing of Jesus after his crucifixion were such as were calculated to give the greatest satisfaction possible. The first reappearance was made when, it is evident, his disciples had no expectation whatever of any such event, so that they could not have been imposed upon by their fond imaginations. For, though Jesus had plainly apprized his disciples that he was to be put to death, and that he should rise again on the third day, they had so fixed a persuasion that he was to be a great king, and, consequently, not to die at all, that they probably concluded, (as he had been used to speak to them in figurative language,) that by *death* he only meant some trial, or calamity, and that therefore by a *resurrection*, he meant his emerging from it. But whatever their ideas were, it is most evident from the history that they had no expectation either of his death, or of his resurrection, and that his death only

* See, on *John* xix. 32, 34, 35, Vol. XIII. p. 365.
† See, on *John* xix. 40, *ibid.*

filled them with consternation and despair, and did not at all lead them to expect his resurrection.

After Jesus had appeared in this unexpected manner to several of his disciples, viz. to *Mary Magdalene*, [*Mark* xvi. 9,] to the two disciples walking to *Emmaus*, [*Luke* xxiv. 15,] to the ten who were assembled in the evening of the same day at *Jerusalem*, [*John* xx. 19,] and probably to *Peter* also, [*Luke* xxiv. 34,] he appointed a time and place when he would meet them all, [*Matt.* xxviii. 10,] at a sufficient distance from the time of his speaking. Consequently, if any doubts remained on the minds of any of them, they had time to consider what satisfaction they required, and might, of course, be prepared to get that satisfaction, which it is evident he never refused them, even offering himself to be handled, and examined by them at their leisure, and eating and drinking along with them. Indeed, the marks of crucifixion on his hands and feet, and the wound in his side, were abundantly sufficient to identify his person. What is recorded concerning *Thomas*, [*John* xx. 25,] was probably the case of many others; nor did his incredulity exceed that of the rest, though he expressed it in a stronger manner; and the satisfaction that Jesus gave to Thomas, [*ver.* 27,] he was, no doubt, as ready to give to any others of them. [*Luke* xxiv. 39, 40.]

3. The appearances were sufficiently frequent, viz. four times on the day of resurrection, first to *Mary Magdalene*, then to *Peter*, then to the two disciples walking to *Emmaus*, then to the *ten* in the absence of *Thomas*, and afterwards to all the *eleven*. [*Mark* xvi. 14.] In *Galilee* he first appeared unexpectedly to *Peter*, *John*, and a few others, [*John* xxi. 4,] and then to *more than five hundred at once*. This must have been the great meeting by appointment, [*Matt.* xxviii. 10,] though particularly mentioned by *Paul* only. [1 *Cor.* xv. 6.] Another time he appeared to *James*, [*ver.* 7,] called his brother, or near relation, then to all the disciples (who were more than a hundred) residing at Jerusalem, when he went with them to the Mount of Olives, and at leisure ascended above the clouds, in their sight. [*Acts* i. 9, 15.] Though these are all the appearances that are particularly recorded, there were probably many more, for no one writer has mentioned all these, not even Paul, who seems to have intended to recite all that he could recollect at that time. None of these appearances, I would also observe, were at midnight, when persons, suddenly awaking from sleep, have not the perfect uses of their senses and judgment; but in

the day; not at a distance, but quite near; and not transient, but of a sufficient length of time.

Surely, then, we are authorized to say that, as far as *numbers* were requisite to give evidence concerning any particular event, they were quite sufficient. For if the evidence of five hundred would not remove the doubts of any persons, neither would that of five thousand, or of any number whatever. They were also persons who had every character of unexceptionable witnesses, as they cannot be supposed to have been deceived themselves or to have had any motive to wish to impose upon others; because they had no interest in doing it.

4. The appearances were continued to a sufficient period, viz. the space of "forty days," [*Acts* i. 3,] which was certainly time enough for any persons to recollect themselves, to get over any impression of surprise, and to be perfectly collected, so as to be put upon their guard against any cause of deception, and to examine and satisfy themselves at their full leisure.

Such is the direct evidence of the resurrection of Jesus, than which nothing can well be conceived to be stronger, resting upon the testimony of a sufficient number of the most competent witnesses, not prepossessed in favour of an *expected* event, and who yet had time to recover from the surprise occasioned by an *unexpected* one. It was also a testimony to which they all adhered through life, notwithstanding the greatest temptation that men could lie under to tell a different story.

I shall now consider some objections that have been made to this evidence.

1. It has been said that Jesus ought to have continued longer in a state of death, as till the body had putrified, &c., so that the revival of it might have been the more extraordinary. In this view, no doubt, the evidence of a proper resurrection might have been made more striking. But then, though the evidence would have gained strength in one way, it would, by this very means, have lost much more in another. Not to say that a resurrection from any state of unquestionable death, is as much a proof of a real miracle, as from any other state; that is, it required nothing less than a *divine power*, which is undoubtedly equal to the raising a man from death at any period, as well as the making of any number of new men.

But had the resurrection of Jesus been at any considerable distance of time, the evidence of his *death*, and, conse-

quently, that of a miracle in his *resurrection*, had not been so clear. For, then, it might have been said that, in so long a time, he might have recovered from the effect of a seeming death; that his disciples had time to recover from their consternation, and lay their schemes for any particular purpose; that, in so long an interval, the guard of the sepulchre might have been more negligently kept, the seal on the stone might have been broken by some accident, and Jesus, being alive, might have been conveyed away, and time given for his appearance, as raised from the dead.

But considering that Jesus was taken down from the cross, to all appearance, at least, dead, and left in the state of a corpse, swathed in spices, late on Friday evening, and then left alone, in a cold sepulchre, it was absolutely impossible, whatever life may be supposed to have remained in him, that he should have appeared not only alive, but in perfect health and vigour, walking about, and conversing as if nothing at all had been done to him, so early as at daybreak on the Sunday following. In the evening of that day he walked from *Jerusalem* to *Emmaus*, which was about eight miles, and also back again, and as speedily as two men in health, and who made all the haste they could, were able to do the same. This is the more extraordinary, considering the wounds that had been made in the *feet* of Jesus. If a man had suffered nothing more than this piercing of his feet, in the rough manner in which it was, no doubt, done in the act of crucifixion, this walk alone would have been absolutely impossible; and on the third day he would have been even less able to walk than on the first, from the inflammation of the wounds. There must, therefore, have been some miracle in the case; and if any miracle was performed, why not that of a real resurrection?

It may be said that the evidence of a real miracle would have been still stronger, if the bones of Jesus had been broken, like those of the two thieves. But as the piercing of his feet, the wound in his side, and even the hanging so long on the cross, must have effectually incapacitated him from walking abroad within two days, the breaking of his bones would have made no real addition to the evidence; the *impossibility* of his walking abroad being really the same in both cases. There would have been a difference only in the case of *probabilities*, which vary with circumstances. But any one natural and absolute *impossibility* furnishes as strong an argument as another.

In this very important view, therefore, the less was the

time that intervened between Jesus's having been laid in the sepulchre, and his appearance alive and well out of it, the stronger is the evidence of a divine interposition, and unbelievers would have had more to object, if that interval had been longer, than they can have at present. Jesus, we can now say, appeared alive and well sooner than it was *possible*, in the ordinary course of nature, that he could have done. It was before the guard could have been relaxed, before the disciples could have recovered from their consternation; and especially before it was possible for him to have recovered from the languishing state in which crucifixion must have left any man; to say nothing of the wound he had received in his side, which alone, if it had missed any vital part, must have confined him, and have disabled him from going abroad, a very long time.

2. It may be proper to take some notice of the story that was propagated by the Jewish priests, who, when the guard fled at the appearance of the angel and the earthquake, bade them say, [*Matt.* xxviii. 13,] that the "disciples *of Jesus* came by night, and stole him away while *they* slept." This, however, was both in the highest degree improbable, and what is more, it would not have answered any purpose; so that they who had just before behaved in the most cowardly manner possible, must have risked their lives for nothing. Indeed, such a story as this would hardly have been suggested by the enemies of Christianity, if any thing had been known at the time besides the earthquake, the appearance of the angel, and a suspicion, perhaps a report, of the absence of the body, and if any thing had occurred to them more plausible at the time. So weak a defence almost amounts to a confession of the weakness of the cause to be supported by it.

The improbability alone of any considerable number of men all sleeping, whose business it was to keep awake, and not more than two or three hours, for which they had time enough to prepare themselves by sleeping the preceding part of the night, (for this was the last watch, at break of day,) and when the penalty of sleeping was death; and that they should all sleep so soundly, as that the rolling of a large stone, (so large that several women despaired of being able to move it,) and this quite near to them, should not awake any one of them, is far too great to be admitted.

The disciples of Jesus, if such a scheme had come into their minds, dispirited and dispersed as they were, could have had no expectation of accomplishing it *undiscovered*,

even if there had been no guard at the sepulchre. The city of *Jerusalem* was at that time full of people, beyond any thing that we can have an idea of at present, being the time of passover, and when the moon was at the full, so that numbers of people (the houses of the city not being sufficient to receive them) would be walking about at all hours; and the sepulchre was so near to the city, that it is now enclosed within the walls. In that climate, and that time of the year, there was no inconvenience in passing the whole night, and even sleeping in the open air. The preceding night Jesus and his disciples had passed in a neighbouring garden; and it is very probable that they had done the same before, since Judas expected to find them there. In these circumstances, the disciples could not have had any reasonable expectation of removing the body undiscovered.

Besides, what would the removal of a mere corpse, admitting that they might have had the courage and address to succeed in so unpromising an attempt, have availed them? There would have been no evidence of a *resurrection*, unless the dead man could have been exhibited alive, which it was certainly out of their power to do.

If a few of the disciples of Jesus had been so abandoned, and at the same time so stupid, as to have attempted an imposition of this kind, an imposition from which they could not have derived any imaginable advantage, how could they have made others believe a resurrection of which they saw no evidence? Would the mere absence of the body have satisfied *Thomas*, (who, though one of the twelve, was certainly not in the secret,) the *five hundred*, who went by appointment into *Galilee*, or the thousands who were converted by *Peter* immediately after this event, and would none of them have abandoned so groundless a faith, in time of persecution? Would not torture, and the prospect of death, have extorted a confession of the cheat from some of those who were in the secret?

Lastly, what prospect could the disciples of Jesus have had of being able to carry on the scheme that was begun by their Master, without his power of working miracles, of which they must have known themselves to be destitute? It was, no doubt, the possession of this power, and this alone, that emboldened them, disappointed and dispirited as they had been before, to persist in the same scheme, and without this, they would certainly have absconded, and have been no more heard of. They were neither orators

nor warriors, and therefore were destitute of all the natural means of success.

3. The objection that has been urged in the strongest manner, and to which I must, therefore, give the more particular attention, is, that after his resurrection, Jesus should have appeared as publicly as he had done before his death, and especially in the presence of his judges, and of his enemies. This, they say, would have satisfied them and the whole country, and, of course, all the world, so that no doubt would have remained on the subject.

But the resurrection of Jesus himself might not have conciliated those who were only the more exasperated at the resurrection of *Lazarus*, [*John* xii. 10, 11,] at which themselves were present, from whatever source their obstinacy and incredulity arose. The whole story, how well soever attested, might have been laughed at in *Greece* and *Rome*, where the *Jews*, and every thing relating to them, were, without any examination into the subject, held in the greatest contempt. Besides, there would have been a want of dignity, and an appearance of insult, unworthy of our Saviour's character, in thus ostentatiously exhibiting himself before his enemies, and, as it were, mocking at their attempts to kill him.

I would farther observe, that though Jesus did not appear to *all* his enemies, he did appear to *one* of them, and one whom no person will doubt to have been as prejudiced and as inveterate as any of them, viz. *Paul*. Now, as *this* enemy of Christianity was convinced of the truth of the resurrection, by Jesus appearing to him in person, we cannot doubt but that, if it had suited the plan of Divine Providence, *all* the Jews might have been convinced by the same means, and have become Christians.

But admitting that the consequence of such a public appearance of Jesus would have been the conviction of all that country, and of all that age, it would have been an unfavourable circumstance with respect to the evidence at this distance of time, and still more so in remoter ages. And the great object certainly was, that this important event should be so circumstanced, as that it should preserve its credit, unimpaired, to the end of time,

If we suppose that mankind, in the most distant ages of the world, had been asked, What kind of evidence would satisfy *them*, with respect to the reality of an event which took place several thousand years before they were born, they would certainly say, that, to give satisfaction to *them*

who had no opportunity of examining into the fact themselves, it should have been so circumstanced as that, besides a sufficient number of persons attesting the truth of it; friends and enemies, believers and unbelievers, should clearly appear to have been sufficiently *interested* to examine into the truth while the fact was *recent*, and, therefore, while it was in their power to investigate it thoroughly. And this could only be in circumstances in which some should believe it, and others not, and in which the believers should have every temptation to renounce their belief, and their enemies every motive to detect the imposture. But this could not have been the case, if the resurrection of Jesus had been universally believed at the time, or in that age, and, consequently, there had been no early persecution of Christians.

In these circumstances, it might have been said by unbelievers, in remote ages, that, as no opposition was made to the progress of Christianity, it did not appear to them that the reality of those facts on which the belief of it is founded, had been sufficiently inquired into at the time; that it might have been found convenient (for reasons now unknown, and at this distance, inscrutable) to make a change in the religion of the country; and that, as the rulers of it adopted the measure, it might, for any thing that appeared, have been originally a scheme of *theirs;* and that when the governors of any country interest themselves to promote any measure, it is always in their power to impose upon the vulgar; that private orders, for example, might have been given that Jesus, though suspended on a cross, should not be much hurt; that the sepulchre, being under ground, might have proper apartments adjoining to it, where there might be every accommodation that was requisite for his complete recovery and refreshment; and that a few leading persons being in the secret, the rest might be imposed upon to believe the story of a resurrection, or any thing else.

Thus the origin of *Christianity*, it might have been said, did not materially differ from that of the several species of *Heathenism* or *Mahometanism*, which the people first believed without any proper inquiry, and to which their descendants adhered, because they had been received by their ancestors before them.

But the circumstances attending the actual promulgation of Christianity were such, as that nothing of this kind can ever be advanced by any unbelievers at all acquainted with the history of the times; because it is evident that Jesus

Christ and his religion, and especially the account of his resurrection, on which the whole of it hinged, immediately engaged the closest attention of great numbers, and that thousands felt themselves interested, in the highest degree, to examine into the truth of it.

In the first place, the apostles, and other primitive Christians, were certainly interested not to give up their ease, their little fortunes, and their lives, for an idle tale. And, on the other hand, the chief priests and rulers of the Jews, who had been so much exasperated at Jesus as to procure his death, even with some risk to themselves, from his popularity with the common people, would feel themselves more strongly interested to suppress his followers and his religion, after his death: and this they evidently did, without losing any time in the business.

Not more than fifty days elapsed between the crucifixion of Jesus and the most open publication of the account of his resurrection, an event spoken of even before his death, against any imposition with respect to which all possible precautions had been taken, and concerning which many rumours must have prevailed from the *Passover* to *Pentecost*, (for no secrecy was enjoined with respect to it,) from the very day of his appearance. On the day of Pentecost, however, it was boldly asserted by such a number of persons, who were witnesses of the fact, that some thousands (who had themselves seen the miracles of Jesus) were fully convinced of its truth, and gave public testimony of their faith by being immediately baptized. [*Acts* ii. 41.]

Observe in how full and explicit a manner *Peter*, on this occasion, gave his testimony, as quoted in the preceding Discourse, *Acts* ii. 22, 23, 32: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him, in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know; him—ye have taken, and *with* wicked hands have crucified and slain.—This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all" (and about *one hundred and twenty* were then with him) "are witnesses."

The boldness of the apostle in giving this public testimony to the resurrection of Jesus, a testimony which his audience evidently could not contradict, exasperated the rulers of the country to the highest degree; and the event being then recent, they would, no doubt, do every thing that men, and men in power could do, in order to discover the cheat, if any such had been used.

This endeavour to suppress Christianity began in the very country, and in the very city in which it was first promulgated, where Jesus had always appeared in public, and, consequently, where himself and all that he had done were known to thousands. And this violent opposition, than which we know of nothing in the history of mankind more violent, and which began as early as it was possible for it to begin, was continued by the *Jews*, with very few interruptions, till it was taken up by the *Romans*, who were alarmed at the rapid spread of the new religion, which soon appeared to be hostile to all the old ones, on the observance of which it was universally imagined that the temporal prosperity of states depended. And this persecution of Christianity did not end till about three hundred years after its promulgation, that is, till all farther scrutiny into the facts was equally impossible and needless.

Did not this situation of things most strongly invite all persons to make the most rigorous inquiry into the truth of the facts on which Christianity was founded, and especially that of the resurrection of Jesus? Would not all the *five hundred*, as long as they lived, (and, according to *Paul*, many of them were living in the year 52, and the apostle *John*, it is supposed, did not die till about A. D. 90,) be continually speaking of it, and examined concerning it? This would certainly be the case, if any such event had happened at this day, and human nature, we cannot doubt, to have been the same in all ages.

What, then, could any of those who are now unbelievers in Christianity have done, if they had been living at the time of the promulgation of it, more than other unbelievers then did, who, whatever else they might do or say, could not discover any marks of imposture? No other facts in the whole compass of history, we may safely venture to assert, ever underwent a thousandth part of the investigation that, from the nature of the circumstances, *these* must have done, and, what is of particular consequence, at the time when the investigation was the most easy.

Though Jesus did not appear in public after his resurrection, the miracle of *the descent of the Holy Spirit*, enabling the apostles and other disciples to speak intelligibly languages which they had not been taught, and also many other miracles wrought by them, were as public as possible; and every miracle wrought by the apostles was, in fact, a proof of the resurrection of their Master. If his mission, confirmed by, and implying the truth of his resurrection,

was not from God, neither was theirs, for both were part of the same scheme, and, therefore, they imply one another.

Thus our faith does not rest on the testimony of the four evangelists, *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John*, who wrote the history of Christ, and of the promulgation of Christianity. We have, in fact, the testimony of the age in which they lived, to the great events recorded by them. These books, or ever so many of the same nature, could never have been received and transmitted to us, as authentic histories, in the circumstances that I have described, if the contents of them could have been questioned.

The inconsistencies that we discover in the accounts of the four evangelists, imply no defect in the evidence, being no greater than are usually found in the narratives of any important event written by different persons, who will always attend chiefly to what is most essential to the story, and less to the minute circumstances of it; and these narratives were all written a considerable time after the event. But the most important consideration is, that these histories were not the cause of the belief of the resurrection of Jesus, but were themselves among the consequences of that belief, the proper evidence having produced its full effect long before they were written: so that it could not have been deficient in any material respect.

That all mankind were not immediately convinced of the truth of Christianity, may be sufficiently accounted for; as, from the little interest that great numbers take in any thing relating to *religion;* from the aversion which the greatest part of mankind have to examine into any thing that is *new*, when it is hostile to that which is *old*, and their listening to any idle tales to the prejudice of those who teach it, which we see every day. And if the powerful, the learned, and the polite, whose prejudices, especially against any thing that originates with the *illiterate*, are well known to be as strong as any prejudices whatever, would not read or think seriously on the subject, (which was evidently the case with the generality of the *Greek* and *Roman* philosophers, and other persons of distinction at that time,) many would be influenced by their example, and join in a blind opposition to what they had never considered, from imagining that it was not worth their while to consider it.

Besides all this, we are to consider the great numbers who were, directly or indirectly, interested in the support of the old established systems of religion, who would feel themselves exasperated, and therefore, without any inquiry

into the merits of the case, would, with all their might, oppose the progress of the new religion. Such would be the case with many persons of eminence and influence; and the lower orders, the mob, might be inflamed by any idle tales. This is nothing more than the common fate of all reformers, and all reformations in matters of religion. It flows from the common principles of human nature, which are the same in all ages, and which operate in the same manner in all similar circumstances.

In this state things continued as long as they possibly could, the friends and the enemies of Christianity being equally interested to discover the truth, while the facts were at all recent, and most easy to be investigated; and the new religion established itself gradually, as, if founded on truth, and unaided by power, it naturally would do in such circumstances. The attention of the more dispassionate and disinterested was gradually gained, and converts were in time made of some men of learning, who were capable of writing in defence of Christianity, and whose writings made other converts, both philosophers and others.

At length the converts to Christianity in all places, and especially in those that were the nearest to the scene of the transactions, were so numerous, that the old religion sunk into general contempt and neglect; and in less than three hundred years after the promulgation of Christianity, we see that, notwithstanding the deep-rooted attachment of all the Heathen world to the religion of their ancestors, *Constantine* could safely declare himself a Christian, without any apprehension from his competitors, who endeavoured to avail themselves of that circumstance. None of them, however, were able, by this means, to throw any considerable obstacle in his way, and he reigned almost in peace, and a longer time than any of the emperors after *Augustus*.

This is a clear proof of the preceding spread of Christianity, and of the hold which it had got on the minds of the people in general; and this was in the most disadvantageous circumstances that can be imagined, if it had been an imposture. But this most striking evidence of the truth of Christianity we could not now have had, if the evidence of the resurrection of Jesus had been such as to have convinced all the Jews, and all the world, as soon as he appeared. What had been the most satisfactory to *them*, would have been (from the nature of the thing) the least so to *us*.

When the persecution of Christianity began, the facts on

which it was founded were recent, so that it was in the power of men of sense and inquiry to satisfy themselves concerning them; and we have seen that they were sufficiently interested so to do. But if one whole generation should have been, as we say, *infatuated*, so as to have taken up the belief of these facts without any sufficient reason, the next generation might have been sensible of this, and have made more diligent search, (and then it was not too late,) and not have thrown away their fortunes and their lives for nothing, as their fathers had done before them. But notwithstanding this, every inquiry continued to make more converts, till, without any aid from power or from learning, in the first instance, the new religion completely established itself on the ruins of the old, and was embraced by persons of all ranks without distinction, the rich and the poor, the philosophers and the vulgar.

If all this could take place without there being any truth in the history of the miracles, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus, it must have been more extraordinary, nay, strictly speaking, more miraculous than those events themselves; for human nature was the same then that it is now; and that men, such as we now find them to be, should, in the circumstances that I have now described, have been impressed as the early converts to Christianity were; that they should have been induced to believe a story which they might easily have discovered to be destitute of all foundation, and have sacrificed so much as they did to their belief, must have been the greatest of all miracles, no natural cause being adequate to such an effect. It must also have been so stupendous a miracle, (operating on *the minds of men*, which is more extraordinary than any effect that is apparent to the senses,) without any rational end or object. Nay, the Divine Being must have wrought this miracle with no other view than to puzzle and confound his creatures, and to involve some of the most deserving of them in the greatest calamities. On the other hand, the miracles which gave birth to Christianity, had the greatest and noblest of all objects, the instruction and reformation of the world. In fact, the proof of Christianity supplies the only probable method of accounting for past and present *appearances*, and, therefore, what a true *philosopher*, whose object it is to inquire into the *causes of things*, will adopt, in preference to any other.

It was, however, you clearly see, of the greatest advan-

tage to the evidence of the truth of Christianity in distant ages, that the bulk of the Jewish nation should, from the beginning, have been hostile to it; while, at the same time, the belief of such numbers of them, prejudiced as they must all have been against it, is an abundant proof of its truth. But when, by the long-continued enmity of the Jews to the Christians, it shall be sufficiently evident, that it was no scheme of that nation in general, and that, so far from giving it any aid in its infant state, they discountenanced it as much as it was in their power to do it. If ever they should be converted to Christianity, before or after their return to their own country, (both which events are foretold in the Scriptures,) it will be such a clear fulfilment of prophecy, as it seems probable that no power of incredulity will be able to resist; and then, as *Paul* says, *Rom.* xi. 15, "If the casting away of *the Jews* be the reconciling of the world; what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?"

I shall conclude this part of my Discourse with observing, that the truth of Christianity is founded upon plain *facts*, such as any persons who had the use of their senses might be judges of. Opinions of other kinds men may become so fully persuaded of, as even to die for them, as well as Christians have done for their religion; but then the *nature* and *ground* of their faith have been different; they having been either misled by an *implicit faith* in persons who, they thought, could not mislead them, or by *reasoning wrong*. That *Mahomet*, for example, or *Swedenborg*, had divine missions, many might be induced to believe on their own confident assertions, having a good opinion of the men; or they might imagine that the conquests of Mahomet and his followers could not have been so great and so rapid, if his pretensions had not been well founded. But is this such *kind* of evidence as that on which we believe the truth of Christianity, which neither requires that implicit faith be given to any person, nor any reasoning, except the plainest of all, viz. that if any person do such works as God only could enable him to do, he must be empowered by God to do them, and the evidence of their own senses that such works were done? The truth of Christianity rests on the evidence of such visible marks of divine power, as the instant curing of the most dangerous disorders, and the raising of persons, and especially of Jesus himself, from a state of actual death, with respect to which, men who had only eyes, ears, and

other natural senses, could not possibly be deceived; whereas, no visible miracle of any kind was so much as pretended to by either *Mahomet* or *Swedenborg*.

We also see the great difference of the ground of belief in these cases, in the time that was requisite to produce their effect. *Mahomet* was several years in persuading any besides a very few persons, particularly connected with him, and who had a prospect of being gainers by his success, of his divine mission, and it was thirteen years before he had followers enow to venture to take the field with them, so as to attack a caravan, to which they were led by the hope of plunder. As to *Swedenborg*, though he died several years ago,* his followers are only just now beginning to make themselves conspicuous. On the contrary, it is evident that Jesus might, if he had been so disposed, have mustered as large an army as he chose, within a month or two after he appeared in a public character.

Some are so incredulous as to say that, admitting all the facts recited in the gospel history, viz. that the apostles, and other disciples of Jesus, had no doubt of his resurrection, and that their previous incredulity was overcome by the most satisfactory evidence; yet, that it was more probable that their senses, that of feeling, as well as those of seeing and hearing, were repeatedly imposed upon, than that there should have been a proper resurrection of a man who had been dead. But such a deception as this could not have been effected without a miracle; and for what end could such a miracle have been wrought? As it had all the effect of a real resurrection, it is liable to all the same objections, and therefore if the one was produced, the other might be also.

If any person will say either that the appearances recorded in the *New Testament* are no proofs of a real resurrection, or (which has also been said), that the real resurrection of Jesus would be no proof of his divine mission, and of the truth of his religion, so that we could not thence infer the certainty of our own resurrection, they must be so constituted, as that no evidence whatever can produce that conviction in their minds. The Divine Being himself (and I must in this argument suppose that there is such a Being) could not do it; for all that *he* could do to attest the divine mission of any person, could only be his enabling him to work miracles, or to do such things as only he himself, the author of

* In London, 1772. He was born at Stockholm, 1689.

nature, could do. But no person, in the age of the apostles, or any subsequent one, ever believed the facts, and doubted the conclusion; so that the miracles were fully adequate to the purpose of them; and since all men are, no doubt, constituted alike, the present objectors must be under the influence of a prejudice that nothing can overcome, and this must be a case exactly similar to insanity.

I now proceed to shew that the solution of such difficulties as these, respecting the truth of *revealed religion*, may assist those who have similar difficulties with respect to *natural religion;* and all great moral truths have, directly or indirectly, a connexion with each other.

Now it seems to be impossible for any person to be convinced by historical evidence (which is the most intelligible of all evidence whatever) of the miracles, the death, and resurrection of Christ, and at the same time to have any doubt of the being and the providence of God, because the one evidently implies the other. If Christ actually wrought miracles, and, after dying, rose from the dead, there must have been a *power* that enabled him so to do; and this must have been an intelligent, or a designing, and a benevolent power, the laws of nature having been changed for great and good purposes.

It is in vain for any person to say, as some, however, have done, that till we be satisfied with respect to the being of a God, which, in the order of nature, is the first of all religious truths, it is to no purpose to inquire into the evidence of Christianity. For, though it be most convenient to *teach* and to *consider* any system of truths in a certain order, the *discovery* of them is altogether independent of that order. In this case, *the first may be last, and the last first.*

An Englishman, for example, may say, and plausibly enough, that he ought to understand his own country, before he explores any other. But it may happen that he shall be carried to *Asia*, *Africa*, or *America*, before he can have seen much of his own country, and thereby have a better opportunity of exploring *them* than his own. Or, considering the *sun* as the centre of our system, he might fancy that, till we know what that great body is, it is absurd to give much attention to the *planets*, which depend upon it. But in this way he might live and die without acquiring any knowledge of them at all. Even the several propositions in geometry may be learned in a very different order, as the different treatises on that branch of science evince, and yet be all equally well understood at the last. In like manner

may men attain to the knowledge of God, and of his providence, without beginning with the study of them.

An Atheist is a person who believes that there is no being who established the present order of nature, but that all things have always been as they now are, and that all deviations from this order are absolutely impossible, and therefore incredible. Consequently, any clear proof of an actual deviation from this order of nature overturns his whole system. The Atheist says that, since we must suppose something to have been *uncaused*, we may just as well content ourselves with saying that the present visible system had no cause, as suppose that something still greater than this system, and the cause of it, had no cause; since by ascending higher, we get no nearer to the solution of our great difficulty, viz. *the cause of what exists*. But the proof of any miracle is decisively in favour of the actual existence of a power unquestionably above the common course of nature, and different from it. This is no less than a demonstration, that the reasoning of the Atheist, however specious, is *in fact* wrong; and that, difficult as it may be to conceive the self-existence, as we say, of a Being greater than the visible universe, such a Being certainly does exist. I shall endeavour to make this argument still plainer by an illustration.

Let a person unacquainted with clocks, watches, and other machines, be introduced into a room containing many of them, all in regular motion. He sees no maker of these machines, and knows nothing of their internal structure; and as he sees them all to move with perfect regularity, he may say, on the principles of the Atheistical system, that they are *automata*, or self-moving machines; and so long as all these machines continue in regular motion, and he knows nothing of the making of them, or the winding of them up, this theory may appear plausible.

But let us suppose that, coming into this room again and again, and always attending to the machines, he shall find one of them much out of order, and that at length its motion shall entirely cease; but that, after continuing in this state some time, he shall again find it in perfect order, moving as regularly as ever. Will he not then conclude that some person, whom he has not seen, but probably the maker of the machines, had been in the room in his absence? The restoration of motion to the disordered machine, would impress his mind with the idea of a *maker* of them in a much more forcible manner than his observing the regular construction, and uniform motion of them. It must convince

him of the existence of some person capable of *regulating*, and therefore probably of *making*, these machines, whether he should ever see this person or not.

Thus do miracles prove the existence of a God, in a shorter and more satisfactory manner than the observation of the uninterrupted course of nature. If there be a Being who can *controul* the course of nature, there must be one who originally *established* it, in whatever difficulty we may still be left with respect to his nature, and the manner of his existence. We are compelled by a greater difficulty to admit a less, though acknowledged to be great. At all events, we see in miracles that there certainly exists a Being superior to ourselves, or any thing that is the object of our senses.

And thus is demonstrated the wisdom of the general plan of Divine Providence, in ordering that the laws of nature should not always proceed without interruption, but in providing that the attention of mankind should sometimes be arrested by miraculous events; since they are eminently calculated to lead the minds of men to the consideration of a superior Being, as the cause of all events, ordinary and extraordinary. Thus also is evident the folly and ignorance of those who think all miraculous events to be so absurd as to be in their own nature incredible, and therefore that no evidence in their favour can deserve the least attention. If the reverence of mankind for their Maker be of any use, or of any consequence to their happiness, which undoubtedly it is, occasional miracles have the greatest propriety, and therefore great antecedent credibility, though all the particular facts require very circumstantial evidence, because they are not of frequent occurrence.

I now come to draw some practical inferences from the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus.

Such is the evidence of the resurrection of Jesus, exclusive of the general evidence of Christianity, or of the miracles of Jesus, and those of the apostles after him, which are also another confirmation of the truth of this one great event. And surely, it appears that the circumstances attending the resurrection of Jesus were so ordered by Divine Providence, that it is not in the power of man to imagine any change in them that, according to the known laws of evidence, would make it more credible than it is with respect to distant ages. Every objection that has hitherto been made to this evidence, has led to a more rigorous examination of the circumstances; and the consequence of this has always been an

addition of light upon the evidence, and a greater confirmation of it. We are therefore abundantly authorized to consider our faith as *founded upon a rock*, which no future objection will be able to shake.

Since, therefore, we may consider it as a certain and unquestionable fact, that *Christ is risen from the dead*, we may likewise, with the apostle, consider him as *the first-fruits of them that sleep*, or that his resurrection is a pledge and assurance of our own, which it is the great object of Christianity to enforce. Christ is called *the first-fruits*, and these are the forerunners of a general harvest. "Afterwards," says the apostle, [1 *Cor.* xv. 23,] "they that are Christ's, at his coming." For Christ has only left the present scene for a time. If there be any truth in the facts, the evidence of which has now been laid before you, he will certainly come again, and that *with power and great glory*, to raise the dead, and to give unto every man according to his works.

Let us, therefore, my Christian brethren, be continually looking for this great event, this *great day of God*, as it is sometimes called; for to all of us it *is nigh, even at the doors*. Long as the sleep of death may really be, it will appear to each of us to be only a moment. In death we, as it were, only shut our eyes upon this world, and immediately open them in another, with the brightest and most glorious prospects, if our conversation has been such as becomes the gospel, but with the most gloomy and dreadful ones, if this great light *hath come into the world, and we have loved darkness rather than light, because our deeds were evil.*

The mere profession of Christianity will avail us nothing, nay much less than nothing, because it lays us under stronger obligations to a virtuous life, and therefore will aggravate our condemnation if we do not live as, by ranking with Christians, we profess to live. Better, far better would it be for us, at the day of judgment, to be able to say we had never heard of Christ, than *naming the name of Christ*, or professing his religion, not to have been thereby led *to depart from iniquity*, and to be to him *a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

Christianity is much less to be considered as a system of doctrines, than as a rule of practice. Nay, the doctrines themselves (the chief of which is that of a future state of retribution) have no other object than the regulation of our lives. What the great duties of the Christian life are, we are all sufficiently acquainted with. They are compre-

hended in two great precepts, the first of which is the love of God with all our hearts, implying an entire and cheerful devotedness to his will, in doing and in suffering, in life and in death. And the second is the loving of our neighbour as ourselves, implying a readiness, in all cases, to do to others as we should think it right that they should do to us. We should all habitually consider one another as brethren, the children of the same great Universal Parent, the care of the same benevolent providence, as training up in the same school of moral discipline here, and as heirs together of the same glorious hope of eternal life hereafter.

To fit us for these devotional and social duties, we should also be careful to exercise a constant government over our appetites and passions, that, as the apostle says, [1 *Cor.* iii. 17,] we may preserve ourselves as *the unpolluted temples of the spirit of God.*

Thus, my Christian brethren, *knowing our duty, happy shall we be if we do it;* that when our Lord, after his long absence, shall return *to take an account of his servants*, when *our eyes, and when every eye shall see him, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming;* but, having duly improved the talents committed to each of us, may hear from his mouth the joyful sentence, *Well done good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord.*

DISCOURSE XII.

A VIEW OF REVEALED RELIGION.

EPHES. i. 17—20:

—— *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power, to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead.*

THE apostle, writing to those who had lately been *Heathens*, frequently, and very properly, reminds them of the

great benefit they derived from the knowledge of the gospel. This he does more especially in the introduction to this epistle to the *Ephesians*. It is, indeed, of great importance that our minds should always be impressed with a sense of what we owe to the Fountain of all good, in this most important respect; especially as, having never ourselves seen or known much of Heathenism, we are too apt to think less of the happiness of our emancipation from it. And as I am now come to the conclusion of these *Discourses on the Evidence of Divine Revelation*, I shall endeavour to bring to your recollection the several particulars of which the knowledge we derive from revelation, and more especially from Christianity, consists.

But I shall first consider the propriety of having recourse to any measures whatever on the part of the Divine Being, farther than the natural means that he had employed for the moral improvement of mankind.

That the Divine Being has really made provision for promoting the virtue and happiness of men in the constitution of nature and of the world, is not to be denied. There are numberless particulars in the make of our bodies, and in the faculties of our minds, which, if attended to, will teach us that vice and wickedness (consisting in the excessive and irregular indulgence of our passions) is hurtful to man; that it tends to debase our natures, and subjects us to pain and anguish; and that if we would live in the greatest dignity and happiness, we must live in the habitual practice of all virtue. Some will therefore ask, Is not nature alone a sufficient guide to virtue and happiness; and may not men, by these helps, and the proper use of the *reason* with which they are endued, be their own instructors? Why might not mankind have been left to themselves, when their own reason, assisted by observation and experience, would teach them to correct their vices, and improve their natures to the utmost? And when the Divine Being had done thus much for us, what occasion was there for his doing any thing more?

In replying to this, it must be acknowledged that, if men would make the most of their reason, and conscientiously obey all its dictates, it would be a sufficient director in the conduct of life. But what must we say if, from whatever cause, and through whatever foreign influence, men become indisposed to make this right use of their reason, and especially if they be not sufficiently apprized of all the consequences of their conduct; and if, in that state of ignorance

and darkness, they want *stronger* motives than will ever occur to themselves, to the practice of universal virtue? In these circumstances it was surely highly expedient that the great Parent and Friend of mankind should interpose, to apprize them of these consequences, that he should send proper persons, duly authorized, to engage their attention, and thus to inform their judgment, interest their affections, and direct their conduct.

I must farther observe, in answer to those who object to the scheme of such *occasional interpositions*, and who are struck with the idea of the superior dignity of an absolutely uninterrupted operation of the *established laws*, that we are not at liberty to suppose either *man*, or *the world*, to be constituted differently from what they are; because we are no proper judges of such different arrangements of things and their consequences. And considering how men are actually constituted, we may safely conclude that if it was at all necessary, (as we cannot but suppose it to be,) that such beings as we are, should keep up an *attention* to their Maker, this great end will be better answered by his maintaining some visible intercourse with them, than by a rigorous adherence to any original constitution of things whatever, while himself was kept out of view.

The bulk of mankind (and by this we are to judge) do not naturally inquire into the cause of what they see to be *constant* and *invariable*. They see, for example, the sun to rise and set, and all the changes of the seasons to take place, without ever reflecting on their Author, or final Cause, or at least acquiescing in any lame account of them; so that something out of the common course of nature was necessary to arrest their attention, and lead them to think of the Author of nature, of what they see and experience every day.

The authors of the *Greek* and *Roman* theology never went farther in their speculations than the *visible universe*. They had gods in great abundance, but imagined the world to be more ancient than them all; and the great objects of the most ancient idolatry were the sun, moon, and stars, the earth, and other parts of *nature*, having never imagined that these had any author.

Besides, in order that man may keep up an idea of God, as a *person*, a being with whom they have to do, as the inspector and judge of their conduct, it seems necessary that there should be on his part some *personal acts*, such as promulgating laws, sending messengers, expressing his pleasure or displeasure at their conduct, and the like. Without

something of this kind, the course of nature, though bearing infinite marks of intelligence, might never suggest the idea of an *intelligent person*, the proper object of prayer, a lawgiver, and a judge.

We clearly see this in the case of numbers who, disbelieving revelation, do, at this day, seriously maintain that there is no intelligent principle in the universe, besides the visible works of nature. They, therefore, do not admit what we may call the *personality of the Supreme Cause of all;* and without this there will never be any such thing as piety towards God, as a Being whom we conceive to be ever present with us, as the inspector and the judge of our conduct. These persons never pray.

For want of this the best of the Heathens were entirely destitute of that most essential branch of virtue. And without an habitual regard to God, as our common parent, there is no sufficient foundation for the duties we owe to his offspring, or even the duties that respect ourselves. Where there is no proper *lawgiver*, there can be no proper *law*. Without a proper regard to God in all our ways, our minds would be liable to be disturbed and unhinged by the events of life, and we should more especially find ourselves destitute of power to carry us through severe trials and sufferings in the cause of truth and a good conscience. But an habitual respect to the being, the presence, and the providence of God, extending through this life and the next, is abundantly sufficient for all these purposes. It was therefore most truly said by our Lord, [*John* xiv. 6,] "No man cometh unto the Father but by me," or, as we may interpret it, *revealed religion* is the only foundation of what is termed *natural religion*.*

It is not only on the authority of the most probable *reasons*, but on the evidence of the most indisputable *facts*, that we assert the necessity of extraordinary interpositions on the part of the Divine Being, to engage the attention of mankind to himself, in order to reform the world, and restore the practice of virtue among men. We see in history how grossly ignorant the Heathen world remained of the nature and perfections of God, and of the purity of his worship, and how lost they were to a just sense of piety and virtue, while they were suffered to continue without supernatural revelation. And from the length of time in which the wisest and most polished nations continued in this state of

* See Vol. II. p. 75, and the references, *Note* *.

ignorance and corruption, it was manifest that natural means were not sufficient to enlighten their minds, and reform their conduct. These, as we are authorized to say, had been long tried without effect. For, while arts and sciences were cultivated, and brought to a considerable degree of perfection, religious notions and religious rites became, if possible, more absurd. For, after the worship of the sun, moon, and stars, (which was the original idolatry of mankind, and continued to be that of the more barbarous part of the world,) the polished *Egyptians* and *Greeks* added that of dead men.* And how deplorable, in a moral respect, is the state of those parts of the world to which the knowledge of Christianity has not reached, or in which its glorious and salutary light is extinguished!

It was therefore a measure highly worthy of the wisdom and goodness of almighty God, in order to accomplish his gracious design of raising men to a state of glory and happiness, to appoint some persons to be, as it were, his embassadors to the world lying in darkness and wickedness, to instruct them in the truths relating to their most important concerns, and to lay before them, with plainness and energy, the proper motives for reforming their conduct; and it was necessary that, for this purpose, these persons should come with authority, bearing evident tokens of a divine mission, by the working of *miracles*, or such works as men might be satisfied could not be performed without God (the author of nature, and who alone can controul its laws) being with them.

With this view, if any history be credible, the Divine Being has actually commissioned various persons to communicate his will to mankind, and especially to warn them of the future consequences of their evil conduct. These persons were chiefly of the nation of the Jews; and the object of their missions was to instruct their countrymen in the first instance, and then other nations who had intercourse with them, in the fundamental principles of true religion, in order to guard them against the abominable vices and extravagancies to which idolatry naturally led them. In like manner was Jesus Christ (of the same nation of the Jews) commissioned to bring the last and most complete revelation of the will of God to man; so that nothing now remains to be done on the part of God for the moral instruction and reformation of the world.

What it is that God has by these repeated revelations

* See Vol. II. pp. 78, 79.

done for mankind, and especially by Jesus Christ, I shall now proceed to specify. But I must farther premise, that the great and ultimate object of the mission of Christ was not at all different from that of the preceding prophets. According to his own representation, in the instructive parable of the vineyard let out to husbandmen, [*Matt.* xxi. 33—37,] God first sent *servants* to them, to receive the fruits of the vineyard, and last of all, with the same general view, he sent his *son*, or a person so much more distinguished, as to be entitled to that peculiar appellation, though he was of *the same nature* with them, "in all things—like unto his brethren." [*Heb.* ii. 17.]

1. By these extraordinary interpositions we have been instructed in the nature, perfections, and moral government of God, and the rule of human duty; a knowledge of a very important nature, and which mankind, after having been instructed in it, by becoming "vain in their imaginations," [*Rom.* i. 22,] had lost. This knowledge we find in *Moses* and all the prophets. There we find that God is one, that he made and governs the world, that he is every where present, observing the conduct of men, that he is merciful to the penitent, but will punish the obstinately wicked. We are also taught in revelation how the one true God is to be worshipped in the most acceptable manner, viz. *in spirit and in truth*, by purity of heart, and uprightness of life. According to Christ, the two great commandments which include all the rest, are the love of God and of our fellow-creatures. [*Matt.* xxii. 37—40.]

Thus was laid the foundation of all acceptable worship and right conduct in life, and thus were the minds of men freed from a slavish and debasing superstition, which had taught them to seek to please God by other things than true goodness of heart and life, and had encouraged them to continue in the practice of vice, by trusting to vain compensations and atonements. This was one of the most important services that could be rendered to religion, and to mankind; as there is nothing to which they appear to be more prone than *superstition*, or unworthy notions of God, and, consequently, wrong methods of seeking to please him.

Beginning with these leading principles, did our Lord, following the example of the prophets who had preceded him, go on to instruct mankind in every useful principle of religion, concealing from them nothing that could in any respect influence their practice. And this, we clearly see, had the most direct tendency to promote the great scheme

of our redemption, or our deliverance from vice and misery. For before men can be reclaimed from vicious courses, they must be convinced of the evil of them. They must be shewn against how great a Being they are offending, and be informed what it is that will recommend them to his favour. Such knowledge as this is, in its own nature, necessary to all virtuous and religious practice. The judgment, or understanding, must first be enlightened, before the will can be renewed, the affections regulated, and the conduct reformed; as, in all cases, a thing must be *understood* before it can be *practised*.

This excellent moral instruction was not, however, as I have said already, peculiar to *Christ*. He did not pretend to teach men any thing *new* on these subjects; he only explained and enforced what had long before been taught by *Moses* and the prophets. But many of these excellent and most important moral precepts had been perverted, and the solid duties of piety, benevolence, and all virtue, had been made to give place to a most debasing and mischievous superstition. The same, indeed, has been the case with the moral precepts of Christianity itself; so that there will always be great reason to caution men on this head, so prone are they to the indulgence of their appetites and passions, and so willing to find some substitute for moral virtue, if they can.

Christ did not teach any thing new concerning God, or the maxims of his government, because these things were sufficiently known to the Jews, and explained in their Scriptures. The great doctrine of *the Divine Unity* was well understood, and taken for granted by all the nation of the Jews. That "there is one God, and there is no other *than* he," and that "to love him with all the heart,—is *better* than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices," was a reply of a Jewish *Scribe* to our Saviour, and which met with his perfect approbation. [*Mark* xii. 32—34.]

Least of all had he any occasion to inform them that the Divine Being, the God and Father of all, as well as his own God and Father, was placable to his penitent creatures. This most necessary of all doctrines had been most clearly taught by Moses and all the prophets; so that nothing farther remained to be said on the subject. By Moses, the Divine Being solemnly proclaimed himself [*Exod.* xxxiv. 6, 7] to be a "God merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in mercy, goodness, and truth,—forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." All the prophets

exhorted to repentance on the same principle. *Return unto me, and I will return unto you*, is the constant burden of their preaching. Indeed, without this, all exhortation to repentance would be in vain.

That Christ was himself, by his death and sufferings, the means of reconciling God to men, and of making it to be consistent with his justice to pardon the truly penitent, is a doctrine for which there is no countenance either in the discourses of our Lord, or the writings of the apostles. They all took it for granted, that all that was necessary to be done, was to reconcile sinful man to God, not to reconcile God to man. In the fine parable of *the prodigal son*,* Christ informs us that God, our true and affectionate Father, is ready to receive all his offending and penitent children, as it were, with open arms, without any intercession of others, or any atonement whatever. Through the whole of the Scriptures, God is represented as forgiving sin *freely*, and for *his mercy's*, or *his name's sake only*.

2. To give the greater weight to their instructions, all the prophets of God, with some few exceptions, exemplified them by their own conduct.

But the benefit we derive from the example of good men recorded in the Scriptures, is only incidental, and is not to be considered as any proper part of the scheme of revelation. Nay, the examples of bad men, equally recorded in the Scriptures, or in other authentic histories, may sometimes be of as much use to us as that of good men. Since, however, as Christians, we profess to be, and are exhorted to be in a more especial manner, followers of Christ, I shall make a few observations with respect to this subject.

Now the example of Christ, like that of other good men, can only be of partial and occasional use to us. In a great variety of the most trying situations our Lord was never placed, so that in those cases his life cannot furnish any pattern for us. It is his general temper and character that we are to attend to; and an attention to this may be of great use to us, even in situations in which he himself was never placed. What were most conspicuous in him were the virtues of meekness, humility, heavenly-mindedness, and an entire devotedness to the will of God, in suffering as well as in doing; and with these dispositions, we shall in no particular case act wrong.

In obedience to the will of God, and to answer the great

* *Luke* xv. 11. See Vol. XIII. pp. 246, 247.

designs of his Providence, he gave up his innocent life to the malice of his enemies, who put him to death in the most cruel and ignominious manner; in this, as well as in other things, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps. "Forasmuch as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh," we must *arm ourselves*, as *Peter* says, [1 *Ep.* iv. 1,] "with the same mind." "Because he laid down his life for us, we ought" also, as *John* says, [1 *Ep.* iii. 16,] "to lay down our lives for the brethren;" that is, we ought to serve mankind, at the hazard of every thing dear to us in life, and even of life itself.

Our Lord's great heroism, in suffering and dying as he did, will be more admired, the more we consider the circumstances of it, expecially his extreme sensibility. That a man whose bodily frame was capable of suffering so much as he did, under the mere *apprehension* of his approaching death,* should, notwithstanding this, die with such noble and calm fortitude, and with such sentiments of piety, and benevolence even to his enemies, is indeed wonderful. There is also something peculiarly trying in being the *first* to suffer in any cause. In bearing, however, not only pain, but hardships of various kinds, (some of them more trying than any kind of violent death,) and bearing them also with a truly Christian spirit, it is for the honour of Christianity, and consequently of Christ, to say that many of the martyrs have not fallen short of the pattern set them.

As to the more common infirmities of human nature, such as the indulgence of sensual appetites and passions, we cannot suppose that the temptation to transgress would be much felt by a person of his exalted character and great expectations, and with a violent death in immediate prospect. There is, therefore, nothing very extraordinary, though highly worthy of our imitation, in this part of our Saviour's conduct.

I shall close this head with observing, that in all cases, in which the example of *men* cannot be recommended, that of the ever-blessed *God* is proposed to us in the Scriptures. For we are exhorted [*Matt.* v. 48] to be "perfect, even as *our* Father who is in heaven is perfect." This precept has the advantage of being an unerring rule of conduct. It will prevent our acquiescing in any limited degree of moral excellence; and recourse may be had to it with great advantage in those cases in which the supremacy of the

* *Matt.* xxvi. 37—39. See Vol. XIII. pp. 337—339.

Divine Being, and his infinite knowledge, (by which he ever sees the most distant consequences of things, and by which he can bring good out of all evil,) does not necessarily make the rule of *his* conduct different from that of *ours*.

3. In order to reform the world, and thereby raise men to a state of future glory and happiness, God has, by Jesus Christ, in a more especial manner, revealed to them the knowledge of a future state of rewards and punishments, as supplying the most effectual motive to the practice of virtue. This is, indeed, the distinguishing excellence of the gospel. By this gospel *life and immortality are fully brought to light*, as it affords a more satisfactory evidence of a resurrection to a future and immortal life than had been given to the world before, so as to establish the belief of this most important of all truths to the end of time. This great end Christ effected, not only by preaching the doctrine with authority from God, evidenced by miracles, even such as raising the dead to life, but by being himself an example of what he announced to others; having submitted to die in the most public and indisputable manner, and having been raised to life, to the complete satisfaction of a sufficient number of the most competent witnesses.

Had mankind, in a body, been asked what evidence they required for a doctrine so important and interesting to them, they could not have demanded more than was actually given them, viz. that the great preacher of the doctrine should, in his own person, afford them an example of its truth, by dying and rising again within a limited time.

This was no new doctrine to the Jews. The great body of that nation were then, and are to this day, fully persuaded of it. This must, in my opinion, have arisen from some very early revelation from God on the subject, but, probably prior to the writing of the books of Moses,* whatever difficulty we may now find in accounting for the remarkable silence concerning a doctrine of so much importance, in his writings, as well as those of the *Old Testament* in general. Had this great revelation been made to Moses himself, or to any of the subsequent prophets, we could not but have heard of it; but having been made known probably to our first parents, and, though it was lost in other nations, having been always retained by the Jews, there was the less occasion for any mention of it in books designed

* See Vol. II. p. 75; Vol. XII. p. 483.

for their peculiar use. But what was well known to the *Jews* would be *good tidings of great joy* to the *Gentile* world, which was ignorant of it.

When *the fulness of time was come*, that God thought proper to manifest his paternal regards to all his offspring of mankind, it was highly proper that, as the original record of this great doctrine of a resurrection was then lost, it should be renewed, that so no reasonable doubt might remain concerning it; and this was completely effected by the resurrection of Christ, who likewise brought it into view in all his discourses. For he did not, like Moses, give his disciples any expectation of happiness in this life, but only *at the resurrection of the just;* and to this *great hope that was before them*, he taught them cheerfully to sacrifice all their interests here, and even life itself; assuring them that they who should lose their lives for the sake of the gospel, would receive them again, with infinite advantage, in the world to come. It was his express declaration, that his kingdom was not of this world, and he enjoined all his followers to *lay up their treasure in heaven.* We also learn from the apostle *Paul*, [2 *Cor.* v. 7,] that we are to "walk by faith, not by sight," since [*Ch.* iv. 18] "the things which are seen are *temporary;* but the things *that are unseen* are eternal."

When God had, by this means, imparted to mankind this most important information concerning himself and his moral government, concerning their duty here, and their expectations hereafter, nothing more was requisite in order completely to effect his great design, the reformation of the world, and the preparation of men for that future happy state which is announced to us in the gospel. For, with these helps, the rational nature that God had originally given to man was sufficient, without any supernatural operation upon their minds, to their restoration to his favour and their future happiness. The historical evidence that we now have of the miracles, the death and resurrection of Christ, is of itself sufficient to produce *Christian faith*, or a firm belief of the great facts on which Christianity rests; and this faith, or belief, is sufficient to induce men to reform their conduct, and to fit them, by a life of virtue here, for a state of happiness hereafter.

Accordingly, no farther help than this is ever promised to us in the gospel. Like good seed, in our Saviour's most instructive parable, [*Matt.* xiii. 3—8,] it is scattered promiscuously on all kinds of soil; but nothing is done to the

soil itself, and therefore it brings forth much fruit, or none at all, just as the minds of men were previously disposed to receive it. *The gift of the Spirit*, of which we read, always means some *miraculous power*, calculated for the confirmation of the gospel in the early ages only. We are taught, indeed, to pray to God to be led into, and to be kept in, the ways of truth and virtue. But we are also taught to pray for our daily bread; and as our daily bread is not given to us without our own labour, so likewise good dispositions of mind are only to be acquired by the use of proper means; though both the means, and the power of using them, being from God, it is right to ascribe all to him, to pray to him for every blessing, temporal or spiritual, and to thank him for all of them alike.*

As a practical improvement of this doctrine, I shall observe,

1. That from it we may infer the dignity of human nature; man being a creature the most distinguished by his great Creator among his works here below, in that we are the proper subjects of his moral government, and fit heirs of immortality. This implies that we are capable of unlimited improvement; and what we see of man in this life, makes this probable. We see no bounds to increasing knowledge and ripening virtue, though we, and all created beings, shall ever fall infinitely short of the perfection of the Supreme Being, who is, and ever will be, alone, the *absolutely good*.

Let us, then, my brethren, with all humility and gratitude to God, for every thing that we have, or are, respect ourselves, as so greatly distinguished by the Author of all excellence, and not carelessly and wickedly abandon the glorious prospects that are set before us. For a beggar in our streets to reject the offer of a kingdom, would not be more preposterous. We can hardly form an idea of greater depravity of mind than for a man seriously to prefer utter annihilation to that immortality which is brought to light by the gospel, and to maintain that the great and extensive views it opens to us, do not tend to enlarge and exalt the mind, and qualify men to act with more dignity, generosity, and integrity, as well as true piety, in this life, in consequence of being taught that the connexions and habits which we form here below, will be continued beyond the grave, where we shall again find ourselves under the govern-

* See, on Divine Influence, *supra*, pp. 89—95.

ment of the same God, and be again happy in our subjection to him, and in our renewed intercourse with each other, to all eternity. To maintain, as some have done, that this Christian doctrine of a future state has any hurtful tendency, appears to me to argue such depravity of mind, as can only be produced by gross vices, such as make men secretly wish that it may not be true. Thousands have found that the firm belief of it tends to make men *purify themselves, even as God is pure.*

2. Let us learn from this doctrine to cherish a sense of the great blessings of Christianity, as the only means of giving men this glorious prospect, and preparing them for future happiness. For, that any of the human race will survive the grave, nature gives us no reason to expect.

Christians would have a much higher sense of the value of the gospel, if they had not forgotten what Heathenism was. That such vices as the Heathens were addicted to, some of them too abominable and horrid to be mentioned in such a place as this, should have been encouraged by any thing that ever bore the name of *religion*, and even should have been practised as *religious rites*, which recommend men to the object of their worship, would not now be credible, did not the most authentic history remain as an indisputable evidence of the facts. Let us, then, bless God for the gospel, which brings us from darkness to light, from vice to virtue, from death to immortality; and let us do every thing in our power to extend the knowledge and the blessings of it to all the human race. More especially, as a means to the great end, let us exert ourselves to purify it from those corruptions which both defeat the great design of it, and prevent its reception among *Jews*, *Mahometans*, and *Heathens*. This fatal tendency has every thing that, in any degree, renders it less amiable, or less credible; and nothing does this more than any infringement of the great doctrine of *the Unity of God*, and the equity of his government.

3. All that I have represented having been done for us, the best instructions having been given us for a virtuous life, exemplified by the lives of holy men, of prophets, and of Jesus Christ; having had the most satisfactory evidence given us of a future state of retribution after death, nothing more could have been done to induce men to abandon a course of vice, and to live in such a manner as to secure a happy immortality. If the nature of *virtue* and of *man* be considered, it will be evident that nothing more could

have been done for us. The *will* cannot be forced. It can only be determined by proper motives. God requires that we should give him our *hearts*, which can only be engaged by the force of persuasion.

As far, therefore, as it became the Divine Being to interpose, nothing has been left untried to reform the world. If, then, notwithstanding all these measures for our good, we continue disobedient, and addicted to vice, may not the Divine Being, with the greatest propriety, speak of us as of the children of *Israel* of old?

> What could have been done more to my vineyard,
> Than I have done unto it?
> Why, when I expected that it should bring forth grapes,
> Brought it forth poisonous berries?*

We cannot think that, after all this that has been done for us, we are at liberty to neglect and slight it, and that God will take no notice of our disobedience and perverseness. No; our sins, under the dispensation of the gospel, are attended with every aggravation that can heighten their guilt, and increase our condemnation. As the apostle says, [*Heb.* ii. 3,] *which way can we come off, or escape, if we neglect so great salvation?* Let it not be our condemnation, that "light is come into the world, *but that we* loved darkness rather than light, because *our* deeds were evil." [*John* iii. 19.]

We who profess what we wish to be considered as *rational Christianity*, have least of all any just excuse for a deficiency in that temper, and a want of those good works which our religion requires. We, depending upon the free mercy of God to the penitent, reject the idea of being saved by any righteousness that is not our own. We believe that no man can obey the laws of God for another, or suffer the punishment due to the crimes of another; and we disclaim the belief of any thing whatever standing in the place of moral virtue. We believe the gospel both to contain a sufficient rule of life, and also sufficient motives to the observance of it.

As, therefore, my brethren, we not only *name the name of Christ*, and profess ourselves to be his disciples, but think that we profess it in greater purity than many others, let us give proof of it by departing farther from all iniquity, and by being *a peculiar people zealous of good works.* If this be not

* *Isaiah* v. 4, Bp. *Lowth.*

our resolution, and steady, uniform conduct, there is not a nation under heaven that will not rise up against us, and condemn us at the last day; for no people ever enjoyed greater advantages than we do. If they neglect their advantages, which are inferior to ours, their condemnation will be proportionably less. But if they improve them, while we neglect ours, double will be their recompence, and double will be our condemnation. May we all seriously consider these things, *the things that relate to our everlasting peace and welfare, before they be for ever hid from our eyes.**

* The Preface to the Discourse on the Resurrection of Jesus; the Address to the Jews, prefixed to the same Discourse; the Preface to the Discourse, containing a view of Revealed Religion, and the Correspondence with Mr. Gibbon, which articles formed an *Appendix* to these *Discourses*, in 1794, are now reserved, for a more convenient arrangement, to appear in another part of the present Edition.

Single Sermons.

A SERMON,

ON THE

SUBJECT OF THE SLAVE TRADE;

DELIVERED TO A SOCIETY OF

PROTESTANT DISSENTERS,

AT THE

NEW MEETING, IN BIRMINGHAM;*

And published at their Request.

—— And hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth.

Acts xvii. 26.

[Birmingham, 1788.]

PREFACE.

I PUBLISH this discourse not only in compliance with the request of a society of Christians whom I think myself happy in every opportunity of obliging, but also because I thought that some of the arguments on which I have insisted had not been sufficiently urged by other writers on the same subject, and at the same time to evince my readi-

* The worthy relict and biographer of the Rev. *Newcome Cappe* has kindly communicated to me several letters from Dr. Priestley to her husband, which will form a very interesting part of the *correspondence*. In one of them, dated January 23, 1788, having mentioned that he was one of the *Birmingham* "Committee of Correspondence, for abolishing the Slave-Trade," Dr. Priestley adds, "We are zealous and unanimous here, and next Sunday, previously to a town's meeting, we all preach on the subject, (churches and meeting-houses alike,) not to collect money, but to give information to such as may have been inattentive to the subject."

Mr. Clarkson mentions, under the year 1787, a letter "from Charles Lloyd, of Birmingham, stating the interest which the inhabitants of that town were taking" in the cause of the abolition. Yet he has omitted to notice this Committee, where he describes, in June 1788, those at Bristol, Manchester and Poole, as the only country committees then formed. See *History of the Abolition*, 1808, I. p. 452; II. pp. 1, 4, 5. This *simultaneous* expression of hostility to the Slave-Trade was peculiarly honourable to the religious communities of Birmingham, whose manufactures were then largely employed by *Slave-Traders* in their miserable barter for *the persons of men*.

ness to join with Christians of all denominations in what appears to me to be right and just.

With the greatest satisfaction should I always *go with the multitude*, if a regard to the sacred rights of *truth* did not, on some occasions, forbid it. Happy it is, however, that there are some cases in which almost all who are truly conscientious, and who feel the influence of humane and Christian sentiments, will concur. May this beget a persuasion, that we *may* be equally conscientious, and moved by a regard to what we deem to be the genuine interests of Christianity, in those things on which we differ; and that though different interests and connexions may, unknown to ourselves, give us different sentiments, views, and pursuits; the time will come when this undue influence will cease, and we shall be able calmly to trace the true source and effects of it. And as this is only the infancy of our being, it may be presumed, that what we observe and experience here, may be an useful lesson to us in our future progress.

With respect to the melancholy scene that is now before us, we must content ourselves with saying, that the ways of God are *a great deep*, and *his footsteps in the mighty waters*, not to be traced by us, at least at present. But we are sufficiently authorized to add, that though "clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are ever the habitation of his throne." [*Psalm* xcvii. 2.] Unless this maxim be deeply impressed upon our minds, and made familiar to us by frequent meditation, we must, if we reflect at all, be staggered with a view of the vices, as well as the miseries, which it seems wise and right in Divine Providence to permit on this wide theatre of the world.

As we cannot say what evils are useful in the general plan, or to what height they may safely and usefully rise, (this being far above our comprehension,) it cannot be our duty to imitate the Divine Being in this part of his conduct. But as we are satisfied that all evil is ultimately subservient to good, and that it is the intention of Providence finally to exterminate all evil; in this most delightful employment we may, and ought, as his own children, to act like God; exerting ourselves, by every means in our power, to remove the prejudices, correct the errors, cure the vices, and relieve the distresses, of our fellow-creatures. In exertions of this kind, our motives are pure, pious, and benevolent. We feel as we are conscious we ought to do;

and with whatever *success* it may please God to crown our endeavours, we shall enjoy the satisfaction of *having endeavoured*, and our *labour will not* wholly *be in vain.*

In this view it must give every good man an unspeakable pleasure to see the general interest that is now taken in behalf of the Negro slaves.* It makes us think better of our countrymen, and of mankind. *Ill* as some think of the world, and of the human race, there are in it many noble characters; and if it was the object of the great scheme of Providence, as no doubt it was, to form such characters, the end of all we see, and sometimes complain of, has been completely answered; and if scenes of difficulty and distress have, in any measure, contributed to form such characters, as undoubtedly they have, we must conclude that, shocking as they appear to us, they have not been introduced into the system in vain. Looking at the *tree*, we may think it ill-shaped and disgusting; but considering the *fruit*, we must approve and admire it.

I also consider the exertions that are now making with us, and which are likely to be adopted in other Christian countries, as an honour to *Christianity;* for no such generous sentiments were ever found, and no such exertions were ever made, by Heathens. We have juster ideas of the dignity of human nature, and of the common rights of humanity, than Heathens ever had.† At the same time

* "In May 1787, the only public notice taken of this great cause was by the committee of twelve individuals, of whom all were little known to the world except Mr. Granville Sharp. But in July 1788, it had attracted the notice of several distinguished individuals in France and Germany, and in our own country it had come within the notice of the Government, and a branch of it had undergone a parliamentary discussion and restraint. It had arrested also the attention of the nation, and it had produced a kind of holy flame, or enthusiasm, and this to a degree and to an extent never before witnessed. Of the purity of this flame no better proof can be offered than that even bishops deigned to address an obscure committee, consisting principally of Quakers, and that Churchmen and Dissenters forgot their difference of religious opinions, and joined their hands, all over the kingdom, in its support." *Clarkson*, I. p. 572.

The *General Baptists*, always found among the consistent advocates of civil and intellectual freedom, were the *second* public body who attached themselves to this cause. June 22, 1787, there was "a deputation from the annual meeting of that religious body, to inform the committee, [which had been formed in the preceding month,] that those whom they represented approved their proceedings, and that they would countenance the object of their institution." *Ibid.* p. 443.

Mr. Granville Sharp, whom Mr. Clarkson justly calls "the first labourer" in the cause "in England," began his labours in 1765, prompted by justice and philanthropy, and supported only by a sense of duty and the hope of divine approbation; for during several years he had no coadjutor. See *ibid.* pp. 66—79.

Mr. Sharp lived, however, to see the population of his country adopt his just principles, and successfully demand their practical application in the abolition of the *Slave-Trade;* though the abolition of *slavery* is still unhappily left, probably, to become the dearly-purchased, though invaluable, fruit of some bloody revolution.

† See Vol. II. pp. 92, 93, 247; XI. p. 163; XIV. p. 285.

that we justly think that every man is a great and exalted being, (that is, capable of becoming such,) we consider all distinctions among men as temporary, calculated for the ultimate benefit of all; and, consequently, that it is for the interest of the lowest orders as well as of the highest, that such a subordination should subsist. But with this persuasion all Christian masters will respect and love their servants and dependents, and will think it their duty to make their situation as easy and happy as possible; considering them as *brothers* and *equals* in one, and that the most important sense, while they treat them as *inferiors* in another; and as those who will even rank above them in another state, if they acquit themselves better in this.

These are just, noble, and elevating sentiments, peculiar to believers in revealed religion; and they are common to *all* believers. We find them among Papists, as well as Protestants, and among those who are favoured by civil establishments of Christianity, as well as those that are frowned upon by them. And these sentiments will always be found among all Christians, in proportion to the *attention* they give to the great truths of our common religion; by which I mean the doctrines of a God, of a providence, and of a future state. These great truths have the advantage of being level to the meanest capacity. A child may understand them. And, at the same time, all that the wisest among us can attain to farther, adds but little to their practical influence. Let these considerations teach the different sects of Christians mutual candour, as reflections on the difference of ranks among men should teach us humility and moderation.

Were we truly sensible of the inestimable value of truly Christian principles, and felt the influence of them, all Christians would respect one another *as such*; and, compared with this great article of agreement, make less account of those in which they differ. When I was at Paris,* a priest of the Catholic communion, distinguished for his piety and benevolence, as well as a taste for science, embraced me with tears when he found that I uniformly avowed myself to be a Christian; saying, I was the only person he had met with, pretending to philosophy, who did so. I told him that I was indeed a Christian, but such as he would call a great *heretic*. He replied, "No matter, you are a Christian." Such magnanimity as this, I have

* In 1774. See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 116, 118.

no opportunity of shewing, and might not be capable of; for no man can answer for his own feelings and conduct in new situations. There is a degree of abhorrence and contempt, with which the members of great and old establishments, like that of the Church of Rome, are apt to regard *sectaries*, which the sectaries do not feel for them. The reason is, that the members of an establishment know much less of sectaries than sectaries do of them. Thus the Heathens had a much worse opinion of Christians, while they were sectaries, than the Christians had of them. They were considered in so despicable a light by many, that it was not thought worth while to make any inquiry into the truth of the scandalous reports concerning them. The shocking picture that is given of *Turlupins*, *Beghards*, and other denominations of the Reformed, before the time of *Luther*, may be seen in any ecclesiastical history.*

How my excellent Parisian friend would have felt if he had known the full extent of my present heresy, I cannot tell. Others, however, of his communion are well apprized of it, without thinking the worse of me, in a moral respect, on that account. Of such men as these Christianity may justly make her boast. In all, however, we must make allowance for human frailties, from which no man, not even the apostles, were exempt.

With respect to the *facts* mentioned in this discourse, I can only say that I was far from wishing to exaggerate any thing; but have taken them from such accounts as appeared to me to be the most to be depended upon; and as the tracts from which I collected them are in very common circulation, I have no occasion to quote any of them. Under humane masters, slaves may, no doubt, enjoy a certain degree of happiness; but still they are slaves, subject to the wills, and, consequently, the caprices of others; and there is no proper security from the greatest outrages, but in the protection of *law*.

I am happy to hear, since this Discourse was sent to the press, that one planter, who employs a very great number of slaves, has had no occasion to purchase any fresh ones these twenty years. This may convince us that a stoppage of the importation would not be a great hardship upon the planters in general. It would only compel them to find

* See Vol. IX. pp. 529, 541, 542.

their own interest in treating their slaves well, and in favouring their propagation.

On the other hand, I must add, that I have been informed by a person who resided in Jamaica, that it is usual for the slaves, after they are purchased, to shudder at the sight of a fire, or kitchen utensils, imagining that they are to be killed and eaten, till older slaves convince them that nothing of that kind is intended. What the poor creatures must suffer with this idea on their minds all the voyage, and the terror it must impress on the country in general, in which thousands who are never taken know they are liable to it, is not to be estimated, and for which no good treatment of slaves can compensate. This is what a *brute* cannot be made to suffer, and shews how improper and unnatural this trafficking with the *human species* must be.

SERMON.

LUKE x. 36, 37:

Which of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour to him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy unto him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go thou and do likewise.

My Christian brethren,

I DO not know whether it be more in the character of *men*, or in that of *Christians*, that I shall now take the liberty to address you. But if you feel as becomes either, you cannot but sympathize with the miserable and oppressed of the human race, how remote soever they be from yourselves in every other respect. You will consider all mankind as *brethren*, and *neighbours*, entitled to every good office that it may be in your power to render them. As men, and as Christians, observant of the instructions of our great Master, in my text, we should interest ourselves not only for our relations, and particular friends; not only for our countrymen; not only for *Europeans*, but for the distressed inhabitants of *Asia*, *Africa*, or *America*; and not only for Christians, but for *Jews*, *Mahometans*, and *Infidels*. And as we ought to feel for our fellow-men, we ought, to the utmost extent of our influence, to exert ourselves to relieve their distresses.

Does not, then, the case of the African *Negroes*, who have long been unjustly enslaved, and have been made to suffer numberless miseries, the least of which is mere servitude, in our West Indies, deserve our compassion, and loudly call for our friendly interposition in their favour? And surely they are not the less entitled to it because their oppressors are our countrymen, and because we have derived, or have imagined that we have derived, benefit from their oppression. Now, then, that it has pleased God, (who, for reasons just and wise, no doubt, because such is his character, but often unsearchable by us, permits the rise and progress of all the evils that we see and lament,) to awaken the attention of many in our nation to this great and growing enormity, and to interest great numbers in favour of the unhappy sufferers; let not us be the last, though we cannot have the honour of being the first, to join heartily in the measures that are now taking for their relief; it being proposed to recommend their case to the consideration of Parliament the present session, and the friends of the measure thinking that a general application from all parts of the country, and especially from towns of note like this, will tend to promote it, and almost ensure its success.

Thoroughly to interest you, and to engage your warmest zeal in the cause, nothing, my brethren, I am confident, will be requisite, besides stating the simple *facts;* of the magnitude of which few persons, not personally concerned in this traffic of the human species, and the treatment to which slaves are subject, are sufficiently apprized. Indeed, had the shocking scenes to which the attention of the public is now invited, been generally known before, the evil could not have grown to its present height, or have existed so long as it has done. The feelings of every man would have revolted at it, and the sense of the nation (expressed, as it would have been, by petitions and remonstrances) would have operated upon the legislature long before this time. Better, however, it is to make what amends we can for our past inattention, by now opening our eyes to this great evil, than suffer it to grow to a still greater magnitude; which, in the nature of things, will always be attended with a greater difficulty of redress.

Could the present state of things have been so much as imagined at the commencement of this traffic, it might have been prevented with the greatest ease, as nobody would have been interested in the continuation of it; whereas at

present many will think themselves injured by the just and righteous measures that it will be necessary to take in the case. But then, if we wait still longer, and the trade be permitted to go on, and extend itself farther, more persons will be interested in it; they will, of course, be able to make a greater opposition to the measure; and thus the evil, though greater, and more justly complained of, will be more difficult to remedy than it is now.

I shall proceed, then, to state this case as briefly, and as impartially, as I can, and answer all the most important objections that I have heard made to the proposed redress of the grievance complained of.

Few of you probably imagine, or will readily believe, that, in order to raise our sugar, and other West-India commodities, perhaps half a million of persons are annually destroyed, and in a manner peculiarly shocking to humanity.* To die by an earthquake, by pestilence, or even by famine, would be merciful, compared with the manner in which many of these poor wretches often perish. All the European plantations taken together are said to require an annual supply of sixty thousand fresh slaves; but these are those that remain after so many have died in what is called the *seasoning*, before they can be brought to bear the labour to which they are made to submit; and after so many more have been lost during the voyage, owing to the mode of their confinement and ill usage on board, that it is said not less than a hundred thousand are annually exported from Africa.† And, some say, that before this, ten are destroyed for one that is secured, and safely lodged on board the ships. Certainly, however, many perish, and many more suffer very cruelly before the ships can have got their proper number, and be ready for sailing.

You will ask *who* are the persons that are reduced to

* On this view of the subject, an able and eloquent friend to the rights and interests of man, thus indignantly exclaims:

> "Yet whence these horrors? This inhuman rage,
> That brands with blackest infamy the age?
> Is it our varied interests disagree,
> And Britain sinks, if Afric's sons be free?
> —No—Hence a few superfluous stores we claim,
> That tempt our avarice, but increase our shame;
> The sickly palate touch with more delight,
> Or swell the senseless riot of the night."

Roscoe's *Mount Pleasant*, quoted, *con amore*, by *Wakefield*, in *Mem.* 1804, I. pp. 308, 309. See an extract from Roscoe's *Wrongs of Africa*, in *Clarkson*, I. pp. 280, 281.

† According to *Anderson on Commerce*. See Benezet's *Account of Guinea*, 1788, *Appendix*, p. 68.

this wretched servitude. I answer, some criminals, whose offences may be supposed to deserve it. But these, from the nature of things, can only be a few. Others are prisoners taken in war. Those wars, however, are undertaken for the sake of making the prisoners, and of disposing of them in this manner.* But very many are those of their own innocent subjects, whom the tyrannical princes of the country violently seize upon, and sell. Great numbers also are continually kidnapped by any that can surprise and overpower them. And these scenes of horror extend above a thousand miles within land, for a vast extent of sea-coast. It is said by some, that crimes and wars together do not now furnish one slave in a hundred of those that are transported to America, they being generally such as are kidnapped,† or sold by their tyrants.

What these poor wretches are made to suffer while they are conducted to such a distance, for such a purpose, before they reach the ships; what they suffer in the ships, and in their cruel bondage afterwards, may, in some measure, be imagined by us, when we consider that these men have the same feelings with ourselves, and conceive themselves to be as unjustly treated as we should do, if we were violently seized, conveyed away from all our friends, and confined to hard labour all our lives in Africa.

In general, it is said, that in our plantations slaves are employed so many hours every day, excepting Sundays, in the service of their masters, that they have only *one* for themselves, and but little for sleep. For remissness in labour they are severely beaten, and for rebellion, (as any attempt to recover their liberty is called,) they are generally gibbetted alive. The shocking indecencies to which the females are subjected during the voyage,‡ and afterwards,

* "The word *war*, as adopted into the African language, means, in general, *robbery, or a marauding expedition, for the purpose of getting slaves.*" *Abstract of the Evidence*, 1791, p. 16, *Note*.

† Captain Wilson, R. N., in his evidence before the House of Commons, says, "Kidnapping was acknowledged by all he conversed with to be generally prevalent. It is the first principle of the natives, the principle of self-preservation, *never to go unarmed*, while *a slave-vessel* is on the coast, for fear of being stolen. When he has met them thus armed, and inquired of them, through his interpreter, the reason of it, they have pointed to a French slave-vessel then lying at Portudal, and said their fears arose from that quarter." *Ibid.* p. 3.

‡ See *Thoughts upon the African Slave-Trade*, "by John Newton, Rector of St. Mary Woolnoth," 1788, pp. 20—22. This pious and popular Calvinistic clergyman had, in early life, been captain of a slave-ship. He says, "After what has been done, if my testimony should not be necessary, or serviceable, yet, perhaps, I am bound, in conscience, to take shame to myself by a public confession, which, however sincere, comes too late to prevent, or repair, the misery

and the cruel separation of the nearest relations and friends, husbands and wives,* parents and children, both when they are put on board the ships, and at the place of sale, would be heard with horror by all but those who are habituated to this traffic.

This business was begun by the Portuguese, but the English entered into it so early as the year 1551,† though contrary to the express orders of Queen Elizabeth ;‡ and no Europeans whatever use their slaves with so much cruelty as the English. The Spaniards have made excellent regulations in their favour, in consequence of which the slaves can work out their own freedom ;§ and the French Government has also interposed by a code of laws enacted for this very purpose.‖ But the slaves belonging to the English are almost wholly left to the mercy of their masters; and the annual consumption of them is itself a proof of the most cruel usage.¶ For with good treatment even slaves

and mischief to which I have, formerly, been accessary." Mr. Newton adds, "I first saw the Coast of Guinea, in the year 1745, and took my last leave of it in 1754. It was not, intentionally, a farewel; but, through the mercy of God, it proved so." *Ibid.* pp. 2, 3.

* "When the slaves are landed for sale, it may happen that, after a long separation in different parts of the ship, when they are brought together in one place, some, who are nearly related, may recognize each other. If, upon such a meeting, pleasure should be felt, it can be but momentary. The sale disperses them wide, to different parts of the island, or to different islands. Husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, must suddenly part again, probably to meet no more." *Ibid.* p. 39. See *Benezet*, pp. 107, 108; *Abstract*, p. 47.

† "Towards the latter end of the reign of King Edward the Sixth; but the English, not having then any plantations in the West Indies, and, consequently, no occasion for Negroes, traded only for gold, elephants' teeth, and Guinea pepper." *Benezet*, p. 45.

‡ "When Captain Hawkins returned from his first voyage to Africa, Queen Elizabeth sent for him, when she expressed her concern lest any of the African Negroes should be carried off without their free consent; which she declared would be detestable, and would call down the vengeance of heaven upon the undertakers." *Ibid.* p. 47.

§ "As soon as a slave is landed, his name, price, &c. are registered in a public register; and the master is obliged, by law, to allow him *one working day*, in every week, to himself, *besides Sundays*. As soon as the slave is able to purchase another working day, the master is obliged to sell it to him at a proportionable price, viz. one-fifth part of his original cost; and so, likewise, the remaining four days, at the same rate, as soon as the slave is able to redeem them; after which he is absolutely free. This is such encouragement to industry, that even the most indolent are tempted to exert themselves." *Appendix* to Granville Sharp's *Just Limitation of Slavery*, 1776, pp. 54, 55.

‖ "The *Code Noir*, and other ordinances relative to these poor creatures, shew a very just and sensible mixture of humanity and steadiness." Burke's *European Settlements*, Ed. 8, 1760, II. p. 47.

¶ *Burke* says, they "endure a slavery more complete, and attended with far worse circumstances, than what any people in their condition suffer in any other part of the world, or have suffered in any other period of time." *Ibid.* p. 124. Dr. Ogden, quoting this passage, adds, "The most consummate and perfect example of oppression and inhumanity has been reserved then, it seems,

will increase, as the Israelites did in Egypt, and as these very Negroes do where their masters are men of sense and humanity. But for this they have no obligation to our laws.

Considering how long this abominable traffic has subsisted, surely, my brethren, it is high time to put an end to it. Hitherto the nation in general has been but little apprized of the enormity and extent of this evil; and those who have been interested in the continuance and extension of it, have likewise been interested to conceal the horrid circumstances attending it. Consequently, hitherto, the national guilt has been less than it otherwise would have been in conniving at it. But now that the eyes of the nation in general are in a great measure opened to it, and in the way of being still more so, the national guilt will certainly be greater than ever, if an immediate stop be not put to a species of iniquity which calls so loud for the vengeance of heaven.*

It may be said that the particulars I have recited are only the *abuses* of this traffic, and not necessarily attendant upon it, and that those only are to be blamed who are concerned in them. But this is a case in which all that is worth retaining of the thing itself is the abuse of it. For, can you believe that the proper criminals of a part of the African coast, or of the whole country of Africa, or indeed of the world, (those whose crimes could, by any equitable construction, be deemed worthy of so severe a punishment,) supply our islands with sixty thousand slaves annually, besides more than an equal number that perish in various ways before they can be brought to a state of settled, useful servitude? Small, indeed, would be the stock, and little would it be worth the while of the planters to encourage this traffic, if it procured them only the criminals of Africa, such as it would be for the interest of that country to have banished from it. And all the rest are innocent men, women, and children, unjustly deprived of their liberty, and condemned to the most cruel bondage, to gratify the avarice of their brutish princes, and of our traders and

to be exhibited in these enlightened times, by the subjects of this free and Christian nation! Let us turn our eyes for relief to some ordinary wickedness." *Sermons on the Commandments*, p. 243, on *Thou shalt not steal.*

* Yet nineteen years of crime and misery were added to the dreadful account, till March 25, 1807, when the *Abolition* was enacted. See *Clarkson*, II. pp. 564—580.

planters.* But no less guilty are we ourselves, who, in order to have our sugars, and other West-India commodities, a little cheaper, (though this will be found to be a mistake,) connive at, and encourage, these iniquitous proceedings. It is not, therefore, the *abuse* of a trade, but *the trade itself*, that must be abolished, if any good be done in the case.†

It is in vain for the country in general, or ourselves as a part of it, to pretend innocence, and leave all the guilt upon those who are immediately concerned in this traffic; for while it is not prohibited by public authority, it will, of course, be continued; and you must be sensible that it cannot be continued without the shocking abuses I have mentioned. The trade itself, and the abuse of it, are so connected, that to authorize the one, is to authorize the other also. And it is an universal maxim, that he who makes himself responsible for any measure whatever, is responsible for all that he believes will be the actual consequences of that measure, whether, strictly speaking, they be the *necessary* consequences of it or not.

All the distress, therefore, that is occasioned in the country of Africa by the abuse of power, and the frequent wars in order to procure slaves; all the injustice continually exercised by private individuals to trepan others for that purpose; all the barbarities exercised towards the poor wretches so secured, in forcing them on board the ships, in keeping them there, and in their servitude afterwards; nay, all the vices in which the slaves are indulged,‡ all the cruelties exercised by them, in their attempts to recover their liberty, and the greater cruelties with which such attempts are always punished,§ will be laid to the account of the people

* *Charron*, who humanely contemplated the condition of *slaves*, more than two centuries ago, thus correctly determined: "C'est l'avarice, qui est cause des esclaves forces." *De la Sagesse*, L. i. Ch. xliv.; *Leide*, p. 191. *Raynal* says, "Cette soif insatiable de l'or a donné naissance au plus infâme, au plus atroce de tous les commerces, celui des esclaves." See *Day* "On the Slavery of the Negroes," a *Fragment*, 1776.

† Such was the opinion of a philanthropic statesman, expressed at this time, and justified by his solicitude on the subject during his last hours. "Early in the year 1788," Mr. Fox assured the committee, "that he would support their object to its fullest extent, being convinced that there was no remedy for the evil but in the total abolition of the trade." *Clarkson*, II. p. 565. See *ibid.* I. p. 505; II. pp. 564—568.

‡ See a note in the excellent sermon preached before the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, by the present Bishop of London, [*Porteus*,] p. 11, small edition. *(P.)*

§ "Sometimes, when the slaves are ripe for an insurrection, one of them will impeach the affair; and then necessity, and the state policy of these small but most absolute governments, enforce maxims directly contrary to the nature of

of this country in general, so long as, *knowing this to be the actual state of things*, we suffer it to proceed. Both the guilt of the oppressors, and the misery of the oppressed, will be equally laid at our door.

This guilt will lie the heaviest, no doubt, upon ministers

things. The traitor to the cause of liberty is caressed, rewarded, and deemed an honest fellow. The patriots, who formed and animated the plan, if they can be found out, must be treated as villains, and punished, to intimidate the rest.

"I have seen them sentenced to unmerciful whippings, continued till the poor creatures have not had power to groan under their misery, and hardly a sign of life has remained. I have seen them agonizing for hours, I believe, for days together, under the torture of the thumb-screws—a dreadful engine, which, if the screw be turned by an unrelenting hand, can give intolerable anguish. There have been instances in which cruelty has proceeded still further.

"I have often heard a captain, who has been long since dead, boast of his conduct when his slaves attempted to rise upon him. After he had suppressed the insurrection, he sat in judgment upon the insurgents; and not only, in cold blood, adjudged several of them, I know not how many, to die, but studied, with no small attention, how to make death as excruciating to them as possible. For my reader's sake, I suppress the recital of particulars." Newton's *Thoughts*, pp. 16, 17. See *Abstract*, pp. 68—73.

"In the year 1766, a terrible insurrection was made in *Jamaica* by the Negroes, upon the same principle as the bravest people of ancient or modern times have struggled for recovery of their liberties. They killed many of their tyrants, who never have been used to hesitate about killing them. They were, however, immediately suppressed, and those who were taken (I can scarce hold my pen to write it) 'were burnt alive,' says the account, 'on a slow fire, beginning at their feet, and burning upwards;' while those hardy creatures, like so many *Scævolas*, smiled with disdain at their tormentors, and triumphantly called to the spirits of their ancestors, that they should quickly join them. (*Lond. Mag.* 1767, p. 258.)

"I ask any human being, who has in him any thing human, whether all the yellow dirt of this world is an object of consequence, enough for men, for *Englishmen*, to turn themselves thus into fiends of hell, and to break loose upon their fellow-creatures with such infernal fury, for doing what no people in the world are more ready to do than themselves; I mean, resisting tyranny?" Burgh's *Political Disquisitions*, 1775, III. pp. 320, 321.

Sir Hans Sloane thus coolly treated this subject in 1707: "The punishments for crimes of slaves are usually, for rebellions, burning them, by nailing them down on the ground with crooked sticks on every limb, and then applying the fire by degrees from the feet and hands, burning them gradually up to the head, whereby their pains are extravagant.—For negligence, they are usually whipped by the overseers with lance-wood switches, till they be bloody, and several of the switches broken, being first tied up by their hands in the mill-houses.—After they are whipped till *they are raw*, some *put on their skins pepper and salt* to make them smart; at other times their masters *will drop melted wax on their skins*, and use several very exquisite torments. These punishments are sometimes merited by the Blacks, who are a very perverse generation of people; and though they appear harsh, yet are scarce equal to some of their crimes." See *Dialogues on the Man-Trade*, 1760, pp. 48—50; Granville Sharp's *Representation*, 1769, p. 64. After reading this extract, at the close of which, as Mr. Sharp remarks, the author "endeavours to excuse those shocking cruelties," I am at a loss to discover upon what authority the enlightened and benevolent *Grégoire* has placed *Hans Sloane* with *Granville Sharp*, *Price*, *Priestley*, &c. in that goodly company of all nations, "tous les hommes courageux qui ont plaidé la cause des malheureux Noirs," to whom he has dedicated his work, *De la Littérature des Nègres*.

"According to the laws of Jamaica, printed at London in 1756," a fugitive slave, "absent from his owner's service thirty days," might be punished by *cutting off one of the feet of such slave*, by the *order* of "any two justices of the peace and three freeholders." *Ibid.* p. 63.

of state, and all those who have the greatest influence in public measures; but a due proportion of it will be imputed to all those who do not exert whatever influence they may have to prevent it; which includes all who do not petition and remonstrate on the subject: for so much is what every man may do. This is the least we can do, to wash our hands, and assert our innocence.

Some will farther say, that there is nothing criminal in *servitude itself*, that it has been the practice of all nations, and all ages; that it was, unquestionably, allowed in the *Old Testament*, and that, though frequent mention is made of slaves, Christians, and others, in the *New Testament*, there is not even there any censure of the practice.

Admitting this, both natural and revealed religion inculcate a humane and equitable treatment of all that come under our power. We are still under obligation to do to others as we would that they should do to us, in the same circumstances. And this rule of universal justice and equity is shamefully violated in our present practice. Besides, neither reason nor the Scriptures will authorize us to deprive of liberty those whose own crimes, or at least those of their ancestors, have not forfeited it; and this will go but a very little way to vindicate the shocking transactions that have been recited.

Moreover, we see reason enough to infer, that several customs were permitted in the early ages of mankind, such as polygamy, and divorces, which are no longer lawful; and though there is not in the *New Testament* any express authority for the emancipation of slaves, we may easily see the reason of it, as well as that the spirit of Christianity leads to it. To have preached liberty to all captives, and freedom to all slaves, in the age of the apostles, would have been deemed rebellion against the government then established.* We see, however, that the sentiments of Christianity, where they have spread, have actually operated to the emancipation of slaves in a very great part of the Western world, which once abounded with them; and those that yet remain in the Eastern parts of Europe, there is reason to think will obtain the same favour, and by the same means, in due time. Thus Christ may be said, in a literal sense, to have *preached liberty to the captives*, by his religion leading to the emancipation of slaves.

Christianity teaches us to consider all mankind as *brethren*,

* See Vol. XIV. pp. 142, 284—286.

equally the subjects of God's moral government here, and alike heirs of immortality hereafter. Now, whether it can be proved that these principles necessarily lead to the emancipation of slaves or not, (any more than they lead to take away all inequalities among men, those of rich and poor, masters and servants, &c.,) yet they will certainly lead us to give every individual of the human race equal, at least sufficient, advantages for improving his nature, and preparing for a future state. In this most important respect the poor and the rich, the master and the servant, may be equal. But, alas! not so the slave in the West Indies. It is the interest of the masters, at least they too generally imagine it to be their interest, to treat their slaves (unchecked by any law) in the same manner as they would mere brutes;* so that they are deprived of every advantage of their rational nature, and are rendered incapable of deriving any benefit from Christianity; of which, indeed, too many of the masters voluntarily deprive themselves.†

Of some masters, better things, may, no doubt with truth, be said; but in general, I believe it is true of the slaves

* *Montesquieu* sarcastically remarks, on the treatment of this *brutalized* race, "Il est impossible que nous supposions que ces gens là soient des hommes; parce que si nous les supposions des hommes, on commenceroit à croire que nous ne sommes pas nous-mêmes Chrétiens." *De l' Esprit des Loix*, (L. xv. Ch. v.) 1750, p. 343.

† That it would be for the advantage of masters and slaves, if due attention were given to their instruction, cannot be doubted. Let the reader judge of this from the following note to the Bishop of London's Sermon, quoted before, p. 374.

"That such a real and general conversion of the Negroes, as is here proposed, is no romantic project, but a thing perfectly practicable; and that it would be highly beneficial both to the slaves and their proprietors, is evident from the progress already made in this work by the Moravian Missionaries. In the Danish islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. Jan, they have proselyted near 6,000 Negroes. They have also a congregation of several thousands in the island of Antigua. This fact has been confirmed to me, very lately, by a clergyman who has lived many years in that island; and I have been assured by a gentleman of credit, who saw them at public worship, that their deportment was remarkably serious, attentive, devout, and edifying. And they so greatly surpass all the other slaves in sobriety, diligence, quietness, fidelity, and obedience, that the planters are anxious to have their Negroes put under the direction of the missionaries, whom they greatly encourage. In the French islands also, the conversion of the Negroes by the Romish priests and missionaries, is universal. The consequence is, that the French slaves are much more decent, honest, regular, and orderly, than those of the English. If such be the effects even of *erroneous* systems of faith, what might not be expected from the doctrines of the Church of England, inculcated with equal zeal?" *(P.)*

See Vol. X. p. 505; *Cranz's* "History of the Brethren, by *La Trobe*, 1780, pp. 149, 184, 190, 233, 238, 311, 384, 427, 480, 542, 545, 596, 601. "In St. Croix, Government countenances them; but the Danish clergymen in the island do not favour or assist them." *Ramsay* "On the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves," 1784, p. 162. The author, after passing 20 years in the West Indies, became "Vicar of Teston, in Kent," till his death in 1789. See some interesting passages, concerning this exemplary and benevolent clergyman, in *Clarkson*, II. pp. 115—117.

in the possession of the English, that they have no opportunity of hearing any thing more of Christianity than they would have had in the heart of Africa.* This certainly should not be permitted by any government which professes to take upon itself the establishment of the Christian religion. For surely it will not be maintained, that the object of these establishments is the mere emolument of the clergy, and not the instruction of the subjects in the principles of Christianity. This is the *professed* end of the system, and the provision that is made for the clergy is only a means to that end.†

But whether government directly interfere in this business or not, it ought to remove every impediment in the way of religious instruction, and put it in the power of every class of men to profit by the doctrines and precepts of Christianity, if they please. If we be Christians ourselves, it will be our endeavour to make others so; and there can be no greater evidence of a man being no Christian himself, than his indifference about extending the blessings of Christianity to others, and especially those whom Providence has committed to his care, his children, his servants, and his dependants in general.

But without considering men as made for immortality,

* *Ramsay* relates that on his "first settlement as a minister in the West Indies," in 1771, besides instructing the Negroes in his own family, he "made also some *public* attempts to instruct slaves." But he found it "quickly suggested, and generally believed, that he aimed at making of them Christians, to render them incapable of being good slaves." And as, "in the bidding prayer, he had inserted a petition for the conversion of slaves, it was deemed so disagreeable a *memento*, that several white people, on account of it, left off attending divine service." *Clarkson*, II. pp. 178—180.

That ambitious statesman and polite scholar, *Carteret Lord Granville*, "hoped never to see our Negroes in America become Christians, because he believed that this would render them less laborious slaves." *Biog. Britt.* IV. *Additions* to III. p. 280. Lord Granville was, however, consistent. "At home he was not for having the vulgar taught to read, that they might think of nothing but the plough, and their other low avocations." *Ibid.* Happily, since 1763, when Lord Granville died, the nobility have become willing, or, at least, have judged it expedient to follow the example of the *untitled*, in promoting the education of the people.

After contemplating such a *lettered* barbarian as Lord Granville, it is no small relief to recollect the benevolent consistency of *Robert Raikes*, the father of general education. Mr. Clarkson says, that on being introduced to him at Gloucester, by Dean Tucker, in 1787, "Mr. Raikes acknowledged, without any hesitation, the pleasure he should have in serving such a noble cause; and he promised to grant me, from time to time, a corner in his paper, for such things as I might point out to him for insertion. This promise he performed afterwards, without any pecuniary consideration, and solely on the ground of benevolence." *Clarkson*, I. p. 369.

† As the West-India islands are, I believe, within the diocese of London, should not the bishops of that see have given particular attention to these poor souls under their care? *(P.)*

and capable of the great blessings they may derive from Christianity, there is something in the principles of *human nature* that declares against servitude, and shews it to be an improper state for *man*, though not for *brute beasts*. These are capable of being *happy* in a state of servitude, some of them more so than in a state of liberty. The reason is, that they have little reflection on the past, or anticipation of the future. But man has the power of reflection in an eminent degree; and it is this that makes him miserable in a state of servitude. Through agony of mind, great numbers of Negroes put an end to their own lives, both before they embark, when they are on shipboard, and during servitude afterwards. And how wretched must be many others, who have not the resolution to come to that horrid extremity! What the planters call the *seasoning* of the slaves, depends as much upon the *mind* as upon the *body*. While the thoughts of their country, their relations and friends, are fresh in their minds, and a sense of their abject condition, (arising from a comparison of it with their former state,) peculiarly pungent, their health will be precarious, and their lives uncertain. And they will be incapable of any degree of happiness in a state of servitude, till their feelings are blunted, and they are reduced to a condition nearly approaching that of the brutes. By a continual attention to some one thing, they become expert in it, but they will be incapable of embracing many other objects.

Some Europeans, finding Negro Slaves in this wretched, degraded condition, to which themselves have reduced them, have had the assurance and the folly to pronounce them to be a species of men greatly inferior to themselves. But were Europeans treated in the same manner a sufficient length of time, it is demonstrable that the most intelligent of them all would be no better. Those who see Negroes in their native country, or in circumstances of better treatment among ourselves, are satisfied that they are by no means inferior to Europeans in point of understanding.

According to the observations of a late ingenious traveller, the ancient Egyptians, so famed for their wisdom, were the very same people with the present Negroes.*

* "Leur formes étoient celles des Nègres un peu blanchis par l'effet du climat." *De la Littérature des Nègres.* Par H. Grégoire, *Paris*, 1808, p. 9. "*Blumenbach* a remarque dans des crânes de momies ce qui caractérise la race nègre." *Ibid.* p. 10. "*Volney* conclut qu'à la race noire, aujour-d'hui esclave nous devons nos arts, nos sciences, et jusqu'à l'art de la parole." *Ibid.* p. 11.

There is, therefore, something in the nature and constitution of *man* that renders him an improper subject of servitude. He was made for a better condition, being naturally qualified to enjoy and adorn it; and it is acting contrary to nature, to degrade his condition below the standard of his powers.

Besides, the master of a slave is in a situation as improper for his nature, as the slave himself. They are both materially injured by the relation. Such a power as that which a master exercises over a slave, necessarily tends to make him haughty, cruel, and capricious, unfit for the society of his equals, which is the happiest state of man. Persons who are bred in the *West Indies*, and have long been in the habit of being served by slaves, are easily distinguished from other men of the same nation. They are not themselves aware how much their natures are debased, and how offensive their behaviour often is to others. We should by all means, then, if we have any idea of *the dignity of human nature*, and if we have at heart the real interest of the master, as well as that of the slave, put an end to this unnatural and improper distinction among those who are partakers of the same common nature.

There are some who say that the Negroes are no less slaves in their own country, than in the West Indies, and that, in many respects, their condition is bettered by the removal. Admitting this, (which, however, is far from being true,) what right has any man to judge for another, and even to better his condition by force? But the worst circumstance in the condition of the Negroes at home, is that which has been occasioned by this traffic, which makes it the interest of the powerful to oppress the weak. Remove this incentive to tyranny and avarice, and there can be no doubt but the Negroes in Africa will be as well treated as the subjects of other arbitrary governments, in which the poor are least liable to be molested, and in which it is the interest of the sovereign to protect and befriend his subjects, as a father his family. Besides, *political* slavery is a very different thing from *domestic*. In the former sense, all the Turks may be said to be slaves; but they are not such slaves as the Negroes in our West Indies. They have valuable rights, which the sovereign himself holds sacred, and dares not invade. But what is it that the enslaved Negro can call his own?

The prodigious waste of slaves is itself, as I have observed, a proof of their wretched condition, that they are

deprived of all the comforts of domestic life, and treated no better than horses, and other cattle, are with us.*

Let not, then, the good sense of Englishmen suffer their humanity to be restrained from exerting itself by mere words. Let persons call things by what *names* they please, but let *abuses* of every kind be corrected, let impartial *justice* be administered, and let *mercy* be shewn to all that need it; and then a period will be put to this grossest of all abuses, perhaps the greatest and most crying evil under the sun.

Some may say that the present condition of the Negroes is the fulfilment of an ancient prophecy, in which *Ham* is declared to be the servant of *Shem* and of *Japhet*. But it is with most probability thought that this ancient prophecy relates only to the subjugation of the *Canaanites*, who were descended from Ham, or, at most, to that of the *Tyrians* and *Carthaginians*, who had, in a great measure, the same origin. However, admitting that this case is in part the fulfilment of that prophecy, that will not exculpate us in our treatment of the Negroes. It was the intention of the Almighty that Joseph should be sold into Egypt, and also that our Saviour should be crucified; but the guilt of Joseph's brethren, and that of the Scribes and Pharisees, was not the less for that circumstance. Besides, the Scriptures have been abundantly fulfilled in the case of the subjection of the descendants of Ham. And as God appoints no evil for its own sake, but with a view to a greater good, so it has pleased his wise providence to provide remedies for all evils, which operate in their proper time. It may, therefore, be hoped, that the servitude of the Negroes is drawing to its completion; and perhaps their future condition may be as happy as their present is calamitous. It is not said that the posterity of Ham shall *always* be slaves. When the happy time shall come that *the wolf shall lie down with the lamb*, when the world shall be a scene

* "One thing I cannot omit, which was told me by the gentleman to whom my ship was consigned, at Antigua, in the year 1751, and who was himself a planter. He said that calculations had been made with all possible exactness, to determine which was the preferable, that is, the more saving method of managing slaves. 'Whether to appoint them moderate work, plenty of provisions, and such treatment as might enable them to protract their lives to old age;' or, 'by rigorously straining their strength to the utmost, with little relaxation, hard fare, and hard usage, to wear them out before they became useless, and unable to do service, and then to buy new ones, to fill up their places.'

He farther said, that these skilful calculators had determined in favour of the latter mode, as much the cheaper; and that he could mention several estates in the island of Antigua, on which it was seldom known that a slave had lived above nine years.—*Ex pede Herculem!*" Newton's *Thoughts*, pp, 38, 39.

of universal peace, (which the sure word of prophecy certifies to us, and the present state of things makes highly probable,) it may be presumed that servitude also will be at an end, and the distinction of *master* and *slave* exist no more.

Some say that if we abandon the Slave-Trade, we give up a valuable source of national profit, and yield it to our rivals. Should this be the case, still a Christian nation should not hesitate to do what is *right* in itself. A trade so circumstanced as this may justly be termed *wicked* and *unlawful*, such as no advantage can justify. Also, with nations as with individuals, "honesty is *ultimately* the best policy."

I apprehend, however, that we shall be far from being losers by ceasing to trade with Africa for *men*. The same people, for the sake of the same commodities for which they commit such horrid outrages on one another, would certainly do any thing else to procure them; and the country is fruitful of products which might be of more value to us than all the slaves we bring from thence. In a country of that vast extent, if we favoured the civilization of it, as by our intercourse we might do, instead of contributing to keep it in that state of savage barbarity in which it is at present, the inhabitants, having already a fondness for many of our commodities, would soon arrive at a state in which they would want more of them. If we only give them an idea of a better condition than they at present enjoy, they will soon find the means of obtaining it. If the Negroes are lazy at home, (though they who assert this can with little decency maintain that their condition is bettered by slavery,) it is because they have no motive to exert themselves. Their wants are few, and easily supplied. But people inhabiting climates as hot as theirs, are laborious and civilized, giving and receiving the greatest benefits by their commercial intercourse with various other nations. There can be no doubt, therefore, but that, were this barbarous Slave-Trade abolished, and the civilization of Africa promoted, for one bale of any kind of goods that we now send to it, we should soon send many, and in a much greater variety; so that the manufacturers of this country in general would find a great benefit from a change of the system, and not one of them would be a loser.

Some will say, how shall we get sugar, and the other products of the West-India islands, now raised by slaves, if slavery be abolished? I answer, our first care should

be to *do justice* and *shew mercy*, let what will become of the superfluities, or even the necessaries of life. But, I would ask, how did we do before we had brought ourselves into this unnatural situation? There was then no want of sugar, or of some substitute for it, though the use of this luxury was not then so common. Let every thing for the use of man be raised by men who shall be paid the full price of their labour, and let those who cannot pay that price go without it, as they do with respect to other things.

Besides, it is demonstrable that we may have sugar, and every other commodity that we now raise by means of slaves, even cheaper without slaves; either by encouraging the culture of them in Africa, and other suitable climates,* and purchasing them there with our own proper commodities, (without the expense of settling and defending plantations of our own,) or even by the labour of freemen in those plantations. Abolish slavery, and the labour now performed by slaves will not be considered as disgraceful.

It is said that the *Quakers*, who, from the purest principles of humanity and Christianity, manumitted their slaves, found, even to their surprise, that they gained more by their service as freemen, when they paid them wages, than they did by them as slaves, when they gave them no wages at all; the Negroes laboured so much more cheerfully, and did so much more work, when freemen, than when slaves.

At all events, let servitude be abolished, and leave it to the ingenuity and industry of our countrymen to find a substitute for it. When things are brought into a complex and unnatural state, it is not easy to revert to that which is proper and natural; but in time it will be done. And perhaps the immediate emancipation of all slaves would be an improper, because, in fact, no humane measure. Those who have been long slaves, would not know how to make a proper use of freedom. But if a stop was put to the farther importation of slaves, it would immediately become the interest of the masters to make the most of their present stock, and, consequently, to treat their slaves with more humanity; so that in time their condition would be the same with that of the *villeins* in the *Feudal* times of this country, and by degrees approach to that of *freemen*. Or

* Mr. Oswald, who was employed in the negociation of the late peace, [1782,] assured me, that sugar might be raised in Africa, by the labour of free Negroes, and be sold in London at one-half the price that we now give for it; but that it would be necessary to secure the favour of the chiefs by presents from Government. He had had a plantation of his own in that country, on which he employed, as nearly as I can remember, three hundred Negroes. *(P.)*

freedom might be placed within the reach of the more industrious of the slaves, as it is with the Spaniards and French; and the man who shall have worked himself free, would know how to make a proper use of his freedom, and would be prepared to make a valuable member of society. However, to take the most prudent measures in the case must be left to the wisdom of Parliament.* Ours is to express our good wishes in the cause, and by our zeal to excite them to do what they shall deem the most proper.

What is proposed to be done by England, is already done in *Virginia*, *Delaware*, and *Rhode Island*, and is likely to take place in all the states of America.† It will be an honour to this country, and the most glorious event in the present reign, if the example should be followed here. It will be honourable to every person in proportion to the share he shall have in bringing it about. But in this we must all give place to the *Quakers*, who were the first to shew themselves friends to the rights of humanity; and what is more, who were the first to decline any advantage which they, in common with others, might have derived from this inhuman traffic with our own species. ‡

With Englishmen I may be allowed to argue from that *love of liberty* by which they profess to be actuated; for surely we are not such selfish beings, as to wish to engross

* More than thirty years have now elapsed, twelve of them since the *Abolition*, while *the wisdom of Parliament* has been otherwise employed than in legislating to *let the oppressed go free*, and to *break every yoke*. Negroe-slaves will, probably, never become freemen, unless, under some favourable circumstances, the examples of the Black Governments in their neighbourhood should encourage them, in defiance of the scanty white population, to become their own legislators.

† One of the North American provinces, as they then were (I think it was New York) some time before the commencement of the American war, passed a law against the importation of slaves, but on account of the opposition made to it by some merchants in England, it was not confirmed in the privy-council of this country. Shall we say that the Government which will have *slaves* does not deserve to have *subjects*? *(P.)*

‡ See *Clarkson*, I. pp. 131—179. Of this society a most exemplary individual was John Woolman, who was born at "Mount Holly in New Jersey, America," in 1720, and died at York, on a visit to England, in 1772. At the age of 23, he became convinced that *slave-keeping* was "a practice inconsistent with the Christian religion;" and during the remainder of his life he appears never to have relaxed in his endeavours to promote that opinion. See "The Life and Travels of John Woolman," 1775, p. 17, and *passim*; *Clarkson*, I. pp. 150—164.

Anthony Benezet, whom I have had occasion to quote, was a worthy coadjutor of Woolman. He was born at *Picardy* in 1713. Two years after, his father was driven with his family, by persecution, into England. In 1731, the son "removed to Philadelphia, where he joined in profession with the Quakers," and where he died in 1784. His funeral "was attended by all ranks, professions and parties," and "by some hundreds of those poor Africans who had been personally benefited by his labours." *Clarkson*, I. pp. 164—177.

every thing valuable. If we have any sentiments of benevolence, or sense of common equity, we shall wish to see every thing extended to others that we covet for ourselves. As we Englishmen, then, would least brook the condition of the Negroes in our plantations,* we ought to have the most compassion for them, and, remote as they are from us in situation and condition, we should consider them as brethren and neighbours, and therefore exert ourselves to the utmost for their relief.

Englishmen are also no less renowned for their *generosity* than for their love of liberty. Our charities, for every describable human want, are far more numerous than those of any other nation in the world. They have often been extended to strangers as well as to natives. Let the same principle operate on this occasion, than which none can more loudly call for it. If those be the most proper objects of generosity who stand in the most need of it, (and according to my text we should consider ourselves as *neighbours* to all those to whom we have an opportunity of acting a neighbourly or friendly part,) none can stand to us in that relation more nearly than the wretched Negroes; no part of the human race suffering more, or more unjustly, or who have it less in their power to help themselves. As their complaints cannot even be heard by those who have the power to relieve them, and they are, indeed, utterly ignorant of the existence of any such power on earth, *we* should make their complaints, and urge their pleas for them. As it is in our power to give them this assistance, we are in duty bound to do it. For it is an universal truth, that the *obligation* to do a good office ever accompanies the *power* of doing it. Where God gives the one, he requires the other.

I think myself peculiarly happy that, in recommending the relief of the distressed African slaves, I can join heartily with every denomination of Christians in the country, the Catholics, the members of the Establishment, and Dissenters of all denominations. This is not the cause of *Unitarianism*, of *Arianism*, or of *Trinitarianism*, but simply that of *humanity*, and our common *Christianity;* and, as I have frequently, and with peculiar pleasure, observed, all the articles on which we differ are trifling compared to those with respect to which all Christians are, and ever have been, agreed.

* See the offence given by *Ramsay, supra*, p. 378, *Note* *.

We all believe in the obligation of the moral duties of life; we all believe in the divine mission of Christ; in a righteous providence of God here, and in a state of rewards and punishments hereafter; and these are the only things that are of real efficacy in religion. Other things, indeed, have their value, and great value; but it is of a kind far inferior to this. They may recommend our religion to those who are not much disposed to receive it, and they may lead us to contemplate it with more satisfaction ourselves, as more agreeable to reason and the Scriptures, (and no real friend of revelation can wish to see these things at variance,) but any species of Christianity, really believed and acted upon, will make men sober, benevolent and pious; good friends, and good neighbours, kind and useful in all the relations of life, entirely resigned to the will of God, and disposed to co-operate in all that he shall recommend to us.

Had the infinitely superior importance of these great articles of Christian faith, which immediately respect, and effectually secure, the great object of Christianity, *(which brings life and immortality to light*, and which was given *to bless mankind in turning them from their iniquities,)* the establishment of other articles, which have little or no relation to this great object, would not have been so eagerly contended for. It would have been thought sufficient to enforce the belief of such things as really distinguish Christians from other men; and that, with respect to things of less moment, all Christians might be permitted to think and act as they pleased, provided they gave no disturbance to their neighbours. Upon this reasonable plan, *truth* would have its proper advantage over error; whereas at present, whatever *errors* may happen to be established, being supported by *power*, their reign (as in the days of Popish darkness and superstition) will be greatly prolonged. But it is, no doubt, for the best, that truth should have an opportunity of triumphing, as we may be confident it will, in circumstances the most unfavourable to its propagation. In similar circumstances was Christianity itself at its first promulgation. Let us, then, think no more than may be necessary of the things on which we differ, which tends to create dislike, and as much as possible on those with respect to which we are agreed, which may promote mutual candour, love and affection.

It seems to be the intention of Divine Providence, that

every thing should be brought to perfection by degrees. If we have any faith in history and prophecy, the last age of the world is to be infinitely preferable to any thing that we have yet experienced; and certainly the present state of things is preferable to any that is past. By means of Christianity chiefly, the great Governor of the world is gradually bringing on a state of universal peace and happiness, which must, as I have observed, imply the abolition of slavery, as well as of every other evil. But God works by *instruments;* and his instruments in things that respect mankind, are chiefly men.

Let us, then, consider ourselves as being *workers together with God*, in bringing about an improved state of things, in bettering the condition of our species, and extending the just rights of humanity to all our race; thus recommending the gospel which we all profess, that gospel which is calculated to bring *peace upon earth, and good-will to men*, and which, when it shall be universally received and obeyed, will make all mankind righteous and happy. Thus it will make even this world a real paradise, and fit us for a state of greater glory and happiness in another.

A PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY, and ever-blessed God, who hast *of one blood made all nations of men, to dwell upon the face of all the earth, and hast determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;* who art equally the God, and the *Father, of all the families of the earth*, and who art *the refuge of the oppressed;* extend thy compassion, we beseech thee, to all thine offspring, and our brethren, of mankind.

Do thou, *in whose hand are the hearts of all men, and who turnest them, as the rivers of water, which way soever thou pleasest*, awaken in the minds of all who are at ease, a due feeling for the miserable; that those who have the power to do it, may *loose all the bands of wickedness, undo all heavy burdens, let the oppressed go free, ond break every unjust yoke;* and may the great blessings which, by thy favour, we enjoy, be equally shared by all the human race.

More especially, may those of our species who, in any part of the world, are outwardly in the condition of brute beasts, but who are often inwardly more afflicted than brute beasts are capable of being, be restored to the common rights of

humanity; and, by the blessings of civilization and equitable government, may they be prepared to receive the superior advantages of Christianity, in the knowledge of thy truth, and the prospect of a happy immortality, as revealed to mankind by thy Son Jesus Christ; that by means of the gladtidings of the gospel, they may be *turned from darkness to light, receiving the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified.* Thus may the kingdom of thy Son be extended, and fill the whole earth.

To prepare the way for those glorious times, when the gospel shall be universally received, remove from it those corruptions and abuses, which still, alas! too generally and too closely adhere to it, so as greatly to obstruct its progress. But, above all, may those who profess it, be careful to adorn it by a suitable life and conversation, that *others, seeing their good works, may glorify thee their Father in heaven.* And may it not be our condemnation, a condemnation greater than that of Sodom and Gomorrah, of Tyre and Sidon, in the day of judgment, that *light is come into the world, but that we have loved darkness rather than light, because our deeds were evil.*

May we shew the value we have for the blessings of Christianity, by our exertions both to free it from every thing that debases it, and to impart it, thus purified from base alloy, to others; being the instruments in thy hand of diffusing truth, virtue and happiness through the world.

Bless our native country. May we continue to share thy favour, in the enjoyment of our liberties, civil and religious; and, in consequence of making a suitable improvement of our many advantages, may we be *that happy people whose God is the Lord.* If any individuals of our nation, from an inordinate love of gain, have been guilty of injustice and oppression, above those of other nations, may the generosity of others be roused to greater exertions, in order to put a stop to it; and, as far as possible, may reparation be made for past wrongs, by our superior regard to equity and humanity in future time.

Bless thy servant our sovereign; *establish his throne in righteousness,* and make his reign a blessing to the latest posterity. May it be distinguished by every thing that can render a reign truly illustrious and memorable; by the extension of science, of arts, manufactures, and commerce, as the source of national prosperity, but still more by the greater purity of Christian faith, by removing every impediment in the way of a farther reformation, and extending the

blessings of civilization and true religion to the most distant parts of the earth.

Hear us, gracious God, we intreat thee, in these our requests, as far as shall be agreeable to thy infinite wisdom and goodness. We ask it as the disciples of thy Son Jesus Christ, through whom, to thee, O Father, the *only living and true God*, be ascribed everlasting praises. Amen.

---

*The Conduct to be observed by Dissenters, in order to procure the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts.**

RECOMMENDED IN

A SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE THE

CONGREGATIONS OF THE OLD AND NEW MEETINGS,

AT

BIRMINGHAM, NOVEMBER 5, 1789.

Printed at the request of the Committee of the Seven Congregations of the Three Denominations of Protestant Dissenters, in Birmingham.

THE SECOND EDITION.

[Birmingham, 1789.]

1 Cor. vii. 21 :

Art thou called being a servant? Care not for it. But if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.

The apostle *Paul*, in this epistle to the *Corinthians*, gives excellent directions about the conduct of persons in various situations in life; and among others, he advises Christian slaves not to be anxious about their abject condition, since they may consider themselves as Christ's freed-men. Still, however, he wishes them to prefer a state of freedom, if they could honestly obtain it. And this advice will apply to all persons whose condition in life is capable of improvement.

It is certainly our duty to acquiesce in whatever the

* This subject had been previously treated by the Author in his "Letter to Mr. Pitt," 1787, and it was again discussed in his "Familiar Letters," 1790.

Supreme Being shall please to appoint concerning us. But, as he has given us faculties and powers to improve our circumstances, it is likewise our duty to employ them for that purpose, and thereby obtain as much ease and convenience as our situation in life is capable of. For this reason, though Christians are to bear the extremes of persecution, rather than abandon the profession of Christianity, they are not to court, but to avoid it, if they can do it without violating their consciences. Our Saviour says, [*Matt.* x. 23,] "When they persecute you in *one* city, flee ye into another."

The same general rule will apply to every similar case, and therefore to ours, as Dissenters from the Established Church of this country. And as this is a day on which it has been usual with us to urge the principles of *religious liberty*, I shall make use of the opportunity to explain the nature of our present situation, and to exhort you to a proper conduct with respect to it.

Our ancestors were long in a state of grievous persecution, on account of their religious principles.* The heavy punishments of fines, confiscation of goods, tedious imprisonments, and eventually death itself, were often their lot. But it has pleased Divine Providence, in a great measure, to give us rest from this persecution, in part by the repeal of the laws that were hostile to us, and in part by the increasing liberality of the times. Most of us, at least, are now permitted to worship God according to the dictates of our consciences, and the places in which we assemble for that purpose are protected by the laws.

But this is not the case of us *all*. If the laws now existing were executed, many of us, and those a daily increasing number, would be liable to have all our property confiscated, and even to be imprisoned for life, cut

* After having, in the day of their ascendancy, grievously persecuted those whose *religious principles* differed from their own. They made it *penal* to use the Liturgy of the Church of England even in a private family; and *worried* to imprisonment, if not to death, the few *heretics* whom they could discover.

The *Nonconformists* of the 17th century have, indeed, hitherto chiefly engaged the pens of panegyrists, or detractors. When they have an historian, one who shall

——————— extenuate nothing,
Nor set down ought in malice;

he will do justice to the conscientious piety of the *Ejected Ministers*, while he must admit that the injuries, however grievous, which they suffered after the *Restoration*, were the natural result of those principles of persecution, disguised under the specious form of a salutary controul, which too many of them had advocated during the *Commonwealth*. See Vol. II. p. xvii. *Note* †; Vol. V. pp. 83, 84, 342, 343; Vol. X. pp. 359—362, 409, 410.

off from the society of our friends, and every thing dear to us.* And all Dissenters are still liable to many civil penalties and disabilities; being considered as legally disqualified to serve our country in a variety of civil capacities, though naturally ever so well qualified to discharge the duties of them, and though our country should stand in ever so much need of our services.

This is a situation no less disgraceful to our country, than to ourselves, and, therefore, we have a double motive to exert ourselves to procure a change in it. We must stand without excuse to our own minds, and especially to our posterity, if we omit taking any steps that shall promise to procure us relief. We are in a state of comparative *servitude*, not enjoying the privileges of other citizens and freemen; and therefore, though, if there be no remedy for it, it is our duty to bear it, as we should every other inevitable evil, being the wise appointment of Divine Providence, (for which we shall, in due time, see that there was the best reason, and for bearing which, we shall not fail to receive the reward of our patience,) yet, as the apostle says, *if we may be made free*, if an opportunity be given us to rescue ourselves from a disgraceful servitude, we ought to embrace it.

Some time ago, by joining in a petition to Parliament, your ministers obtained a release from a most unreasonable obligation to subscribe many of the articles of the Church of England,† (a church by which we are oppressed, being

* By the exceptions in the *Act of Toleration*, 1689, and the penalties in the *Act against Blasphemy*, 1698, on those who "deny any one of the persons in the holy Trinity to be God." See Vol. V. p. 483; Vol. X. pp. 487, 488. From the penalties denounced by these intolerant measures of legislation, Unitarian Christians were relieved in 1813, by the exertions of Mr. Wm. Smith, the justly respected M. P. for Norwich. See Vol. X. pp. 494, 495, *Note*. In the *Act against Blasphemy* the penalties remain in all their rigour, to punish those who, "by writing, printing, teaching, or advised speaking, shall deny the Christian religion, or the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be of divine authority." Thus the Magistrate may still, according to his worldly wisdom, *protect* and *recommend* Christianity, by the occasional imprisonment and ruin of an *honest* unbeliever; while *Hume* and *Gibbon* stand, splendid, on his shelves, and too many inconsiderate Christians applaud his conduct, as if he were doing God service. See Vol. X. p. 495, *Note;* Vol. XIV. pp. 514, 515, *Note*.

† This *obligation* formed one of the clauses of the *Act of Toleration*, 1689. The *release* was by no means complete, as Dissenting Ministers became liable to an acknowledgment of the Magistrate's authority in religion, by being required to testify before him their belief in the Scriptures. See Vol. X. pp. 492, 493. Liberty, "just, impartial Liberty," is, indeed, unattained till the professor of any religion, and he who makes no religious profession, can each say, with effect, to the Magistrate, as the merchants of France said to the great statesman *Colbert*, who would have interfered, though for their benefit, *Laissez nous faire*.

made to contribute to its support,* while we receive none of its emoluments,) and an application has more lately been made for the repeal of those laws which disqualify you of the laity from serving your country in several civil capacities, called *the Corporation and Test Acts;* laws which, though not both of them intended to affect us, yet eventually and necessarily have done it. Twice have motions been made in the House of Commons for the purpose of this repeal, and twice have we met with a repulse; though it has appeared that our friends have increased, and therefore it is thought that we have sufficient encouragement to continue our application, which, no doubt, we ought to do, while success shall appear to be within our reach.†

That we are fully entitled to the relief we sue for, and even to more than we have yet solicited, I shall shew in the first place, replying to some objections that have been made to our relief; and then I shall point out what seems to be the most proper method that we should pursue, in order to obtain it.

1. It must be unjust that we should be subjected to any *penalty*, unless it can be shewn that we are guilty of some *offence*. Without this, it is manifestly unreasonable to make any distinction whatever between us and any of our fellow-citizens. Now this, I believe, is not even pretended; Dissenters, as a body, being unquestionably as good members of society as any other part of the community. Their behaviour is as peaceable, and they have always shewn themselves as well affected to the constitution as it was settled at the Revolution, to which they eminently contributed. It is not denied that they have shewn themselves as well affected to the reigning family as those who are favoured by government, at their expense. Nay, in all the

* Yet *Tithes*, which must be here intended, however detrimental to the public interest, no more oppress a *Dissenter* as such, than any tax imposed on the whole nation by the legislature. Thus, for the occupancy of a *tithe-free* estate, a *Dissenter* will readily pay an increased rent, equal to the supposed peculiar advantage. This sufficiently shews the true state of a question so frequently misunderstood and misstated by Dissenters in general, and especially by *Quakers*. The latter inconsistently reckon among their annual *sufferings* the enforced payment of *tithe*, for the amount of which, however, they doubtless provided in the previous consideration of rent.

The late Mr. Matthews of Bath, a public-spirited citizen, and an enlightened Christian, of whom the Quakers unhappily deprived themselves by *disownment*, for his conduct in the case of *tithes*, has shewn, unanswerably, that the *Quaker* must either pay *tithe* like his neighbour *Churchman*, or, if relieved, on his pretence of sufferings, would make *a gain of godliness*. See *Recorder*, I. pp. 49—51.

† See Vol. X. pp. 493, 494.

late reigns, the Dissenters were always considered as the most zealously attached to the interests of the house of Hanover; and their most violent enemies were always the most suspected of disaffection. These are facts so notorious, that they can never be denied.

Why, then, should we be excluded from offices of trust and power under a government to which our affection was never questioned, if we be qualified to fill them? And of this also there can be no question; Dissenters in general not being destitute either of ability or public spirit. On the contrary, it is evident that they are generally among the foremost in all schemes of public utility, as intelligent in planning them, and as active, and as generous, in their support. We may safely appeal to every town and every village in the kingdom, where the Dissenters are in sufficient numbers, for the truth of these assertions.*

Every exclusion, then, from offices which we are qualified to fill, is injurious and unjust; and the laws by which we are now oppressed must be pronounced to be *partial*, and, therefore, *iniquitous;* making distinctions in favour of one part of the community, and to the disadvantage of another, without any regard to the merit or demerit of either, as *members of society*. All such laws, therefore, ought to be repealed; because the first of all the obligations of society is *justice*, fair, impartial justice, which, in our case, is evidently violated.

2. Our treatment is manifestly improper and unjust, because we are subjected to *civil punishments* for pretended offences which are not of a *civil nature*, that is, for holding particular religious opinions, with which the civil magistrate, as such, has no concern. His proper duty is to preserve the peace of society, or to see that no member of it injures another in his person or property. But how is any person injured in these respects, by my holding religious opinions which he disapproves? If they be erroneous opinions, is it not a sufficient punishment that I injure

* This implies no reflection on the proper members of the Established Church. They who openly dissent from any establishment, whatever it be, and whether they be right or wrong in so doing, must be men of some reflection and energy of mind, which will not always be confined to matters of religion only. And the same activity, and the same habits will, in some measure, descend to their posterity, while they have to make their cause good against the great majority of their countrymen. On the contrary, all the thoughtless part of any nation, men without reflection, or energy of character, will, of course, remain with the Established Church, whatever it be, and will follow it in all its changes. Consequently, a greater proportion of these characters will class with the Establishment than with the Dissenters; though, in reality, they ought to be classed with neither. *(P.)*

myself by them; and have not my fellow-citizens sufficient advantage over me, by enjoying the truth, while I am involved in error?

If they think that my opinions will subject me to everlasting punishment in *a future world*, ought not *that* to be deemed sufficient, without making me suffer in *this* world also? And yet thus it is that many of us are treated by the legislature of this country. It has thought proper to declare, that all who do not believe in one of her doctrines relating to the Divine Essence, shall, *without doubt, perish everlastingly;* but, not content with this, it is made confiscation of goods, and imprisonment for life, to maintain the contrary.* But what connexion can there be between the peace and good order of society, and any opinion concerning *the Divine Essence?*

If it be said that the publishing such opinions will endanger the salvation of others, as well as that of the person who holds them, I ask, what is that to *the civil magistrate*, whose business is with the things of *this life only;* who was not appointed to act any part in things of a *spiritual*, but only in those of a *temporal* nature? † And how can a merely civil magistrate be supposed to be a competent judge of those matters; or, which comes to the same thing, how can he know who is best able to direct him?

3. As to *the Test Act*, there is a particular injustice in continuing it, with respect to Protestant Dissenters, as it was not originally intended to affect them, but the Catholics only; and the Dissenters then in parliament generously consented to the passing of it with a view to the public good, though they knew that, for a time, they themselves would be sufferers by it;‡ having no doubt, from the equity and generosity of government, but that some mode of relief would be provided for them, as was, indeed, at that time intended. But though they made the sacrifice, they received no recompence. The burden which, for the sake of the public,§ they voluntarily laid upon themselves,

* See *supra*, pp. 390, 391.

† See *Roger Williams*, Vol. X. p. 405, *Note;* Vol. XIV. p. 250, *Note* ‡.

‡ See Vol. X. pp. 413, 414; *Burnet*, O. T. Vol. I. pp. 347, 348, A. D. 1673; Harris's *Lives*, V. pp. 150—158.

§ And, perhaps, to indulge "a due *Protestant* animosity" against Roman Catholics. The judgment even of *Milton* was too much swayed by vulgar prejudices upon this subject. In his "Treatise of Civil Power, in Ecclesiastical Causes, shewing that it is not lawful for any Power on Earth to compel in Matters of Religion," published in 1659, he excepts the case of Roman Catholics, whom he abandons to the controul of the *Civil Power*, for reasons which now appear unworthy of his manly mind. In 1673, the date of the Test Act, and the year preceding

oppresses their posterity to this day. But, notwithstanding this, we do not blame our ancestors for the part they acted; and in similar circumstances should, I doubt not, imitate their disinterested conduct, even though we should be apprized that we should expose ourselves and our posterity to equal inconvenience in consequence of it. We have more reason to glory in bearing our hardships, than our adversaries have in imposing them.

I shall now proceed to answer some of the principal objections that have been made to our being relieved.

1. It is commonly said by our adversaries, that the repeal of the acts we complain of would be *a violation of the constitution*, which they say consists of two parts, the *Church* and the *State*, that all changes in the constitution are hazardous, and that the king is sworn to preserve it.

But if every change in the laws be a violation of the constitution, it is violated every sessions of parliament; and if the changes that are continually making, by the repeal of old laws, and enacting new ones, be *no* violation, but an improvement of the constitution, why may not this, and other changes, have the same good effect? Nothing human is so perfect as not to admit of improvement, and the English constitution is certainly no exception to this. It would be impiety to suppose it.

That the *ecclesiastical* part, as it is called, of our constitution has not that close connexion with the *civil* part which its advocates imagine, is evident from the following considerations. A total change was made in the ecclesiastical system by Henry VIII.,* without any change whatever in the civil constitution, which indeed continued the same during the farther reformation by Edward VI.,† the restoration of Popery under Queen Mary,‡ and the final overthrow of it by Queen Elizabeth.§ Again; Charles I.

Milton's death, he published a Treatise "Of True Religion, Heresie, Schism, Toleration, and what best means may be used against the growth of Popery." In this *Treatise*, he maintained, by arguments more worthy of a *Protestant Associator* in 1780, "that Popery, as being idolatrous, is not to be tolerated, either in public or in private;" though, as to Papists, "to punish them by corporal punishment, or fines in their estates, stands not with the clemency of the gospel, more than what appertains to the security of the state." He adds, "but first we must remove their idolatry, and all the furniture thereof, whether idols or the mass." Then giving the second commandment as his authority, he thus concludes: "If they say, that by removing their idols, we violate their consciences, we have no warrant to regard conscience which is not grounded on scripture." See "The Works of Mr. John Milton," 1697, pp. 243, 251, 428, 431, 432; Dr. Symmons's "Life of John Milton," Ed. 2, 1810, pp. 562—565.

* See Vol. V. pp. 427—429; Vol. X. pp. 235, 236.

† See *ibid.* pp. 241—243. ‡ See *ibid.* p. 244.

§ See Vol. V. p. 430; Vol. X. pp. 245, 387.

endevoured to subvert the civil part of the constitution, without altering the ecclesiastical part. *This*, however, was overturned by the Parliament; and though the civil constitution was changed at the same time, it was in a manner, and upon principles, altogether independent of the change in the hierarchy. After the suppression of kingly power, there were many changes in the constitution of the state, without any change whatever in that of the church; and if Charles II. and his profligate court had thought fit, they might have established the Presbyterian religion in *England*, as it now is in *Scotland*, and the civil government would have remained the same. Is not the civil constitution of *Scotland* very nearly the same with that of *England?* Have not the *English* and the *Scotch* the same king and the same parliament; and yet their ecclesiastical constitutions are totally different? How, then, is one essential to the being or the well-being of the other?

As it is evident that the revolutions in the *church* and the *state* had so little connexion with each other, it is impossible that any thing deserving to be the *constitution* should be affected by the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, which the Church of England did without till the reign of Charles II.,* and which it now finds no want of in Ireland.

2. It will be urged that, notwithstanding the equity of our plea, justice cannot be done to us by the redress of our grievances, without, at least, endangering the Established Church. But if that church, or any church, cannot stand but on the ruins of justice, it ought to fall; and they who urge *this*, do, in fact, confess that it does not deserve to be supported.

But their fears are altogether imaginary; and of this the experience of other nations might convince them. For, in no Christian country besides this are Dissenters from the established religion incapable of civil offices. Nay, they are frequently called to them, and no injury has been found to result from it to their established churches. This is the case in Russia, in Prussia, in Holland, and even in France, where the generals and prime-ministers have been *Protestants*, though the religion of the country is *Catholic*.

Heathen emperors, in this more wise and magnanimous than we, employed Christians, as well as those of their own religion, in every department of state, the duties of which

* In 1673, See *supra*, p. 394.

they were qualified to discharge; and the Christian emperors equally employed Heathens.

There is no Test Act *in Scotland.* There, members of the Episcopal Church of England are capable of any civil offices, though the established religion is Presbyterian; and it was lately repealed in Ireland,* where the danger to the Established Church was, to appearance, much greater than it can be in this country; since the Dissenters in Ireland are perhaps more in number than the members of the Church of England; whereas here we bear so small a proportion to them, that all idea of danger to the church from this circumstance, is imaginary and absurd. The apprehension of danger, therefore, to the Established Church, from the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, is either a mere pretence, or, if serious, is undeserving of a serious answer.

It is to be observed, that when the Acts we complain of are repealed, Dissenters will not necessarily be introduced into offices of trust and power. This will still depend upon the will of the sovereign, and those who are responsible for his measures. And if the king and the ministry should be thought to make an improper use of their power, by employing too many Dissenters, (which nobody, I believe, will seriously apprehend,) the evil may at any time be checked, by a remonstrance from either, or both of the two houses of parliament.

Our hardships having now been shewn to be real, and, consequently, the continuance of them unjust, the next question is, what we should do in order to obtain redress? For, though it be our duty, as subjects to civil government, and members of society, not to disturb the peace of it for small matters, and especially, as subjects of the moral government of God, to bear with patience and submission to *him*, the inconveniencies of *any* situation in which his providence shall place us, yet, if we can obtain our deliverance from them, it is our duty (for which we have the authority of the apostle, in my text) to *choose it rather*, and, consequently, to adopt measures proper to gain that end.

Considering the sufferings to which Christians, Protestants, and Protestant Dissenters, have been exposed in

* In 1782. The question had been warmly agitated from 1731 to 1733. See *Abernethy's* "Tracts and Sermons," 1751, pp. 1—135. Dr. Kippis says, "The Dissenters were opposed in their attempt by the formidable and successful pen of Dr. Swift. The Dean wrote three Tracts against them, which are distinguished by all that asperity he was capable of." *Biog. Brit.* I. p. 31, *Note* H.

former times, all that we have now to complain of, is nothing. It is a state of peace and liberty, and what we cannot be too thankful to God for. But there is no reason why we should despise any good that the providence of God shall place within our reach. For, though we are ready to bear *evil*, I trust we are not undeserving of *good*, and should not make an improper use of it. It is our duty, therefore, to attempt this as well as any other improvement in our situation.

Now all that can be advised in the case, (but what, with patience and perseverance, must be effectual,) is a fair and candid representation of our case to the nation at large, and especially to those who have power to give us relief. The voice of *reason*, of *truth*, and of *right*, is sure to be heard, and to prevail in the end; and though prejudice, with which we have to contend, may overbear it, it can only be for a time.

Very strong prejudices, however, against truth, or right, cannot be expected to be removed at once. The clearest truths in the world, in politics, in philosophy, or in religion, require *time* to be generally understood and received. Pains must be taken to exhibit them in a proper light, and to remove objections; and if reasonable evidence be rejected at the first, it must be presented again and again; and then, if the cause be a good one, (as ours unquestionably is,) we cannot doubt of success in the end. The prejudices of some persons against the clearest and most important truths may be so strong, (as we see in the case of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* of our Saviour's time,) that no evidence will convince *them*. In this case our hopes must be from persons of more ingenuous dispositions, especially the young, whose minds will be more susceptible of new and better impressions.

In this case it is our duty to bear even with the perverseness of our country, as children with respect to an aged parent. For the prejudices of great numbers, like those of *age*, cannot be expected to yield to the first remonstrance, but require patient and gentle treatment, with some degree of prudent address.

This is not a business that would justify our having recourse to arms, if there was any prospect of succeeding in that way; because more evil than good would be the consequence of the attempt. But no objection can be made to a calm and peaceable representation of our case, to the impartial reason of our governors. It is only their *attention*

that we claim, and still they are at liberty to refuse us. We have, however, a right to be heard; and our cause is so clear, that we may be confident every fresh hearing will procure us more friends, out of parliament, if not in it; so that with perseverance, our success is certain.

Besides, the present times are highly favourable to liberality of every kind; and the wickedness and folly of persecution, or subjecting men to any punishment on account of their religious principles, is every day more and more apparent, so as now to strike all mankind; though little more than a century ago, all parties agreed in the propriety of it; and they are now only the extremely bigotted and narrow-minded, who are advocates for such restraints as are put upon us. The great principles of religious, as well as of civil liberty, are every day, and every where, better understood, and treatises on these subjects are more numerous, and becoming more popular, in all parts of Europe: so that *religious intolerance* is every where reprobated.

Nothing, therefore, is requisite in our case, but to shew that our adversaries are chargeable with *intolerance* in their treatment of us, and that they really do *persecute* us; and it is not the punishment of *death* only that constitutes persecution. It is *imposing any hardship whatever on a man on account of his religious principles:* and this cannot be denied to be our case, if it be at all attended to; for are we not worse situated in a civil respect than we should be if we were not Dissenters? And if so, we are in a state of persecution as Dissenters.

It is only in *degree* that our treatment differs from the most severe persecution.* The *principle* is the very same; and it is capable of any application, according to the apprehensions of those who maintain it. For if the church is to be guarded, as connected with the constitution of the state, it must have whatever guards shall be deemed *necessary;* and though one person may think it sufficiently guarded by Dissenters being kept out of those civil offices from which they are excluded by the Corporation and Test Acts, another may think it necessary that they be deprived of the privilege we now enjoy, of electing, and much more of being elected, members of parliament. A third may say that the church cannot be safe while the meeting-houses are open; a fourth, that we ought not to be allowed to publish any defence of

* Bishop Watson, in one of his *Charges*, remarks these *degrees* of persecution, from the dungeon and the stake, to mere *civil* disability, on account of *religious* opinion.

our principles, (since the danger to the church must be in proportion to the increase of Dissenters,) and a fifth, more quick-sighted and apprehensive than the rest, and less confident of the force of his reasons and arguments, may even think it necessary to banish us the country; or, lest we should return with increased animosity, exterminate us at once, while we are in their power.

It is not to say what this principle of *guarding the church* may dictate. And the more timid and apprehensive a man is, the more cruel and unrelenting a persecutor he will be. It is the *principle*, therefore, that we ought to attend to, if we wish to guard against the *effects* of it; and this can only be done by keeping the civil magistrate within his proper duty, that is, guarding, not the church, but the lives and property of all the citizens, and taking care that they do not, on any pretence whatever, injure one another; but, in all matters of religion, to leave them to think and act for themselves. This is all that the *public good*, which is the sole end of civil government, requires. To infringe upon this great and clear principle, is to open a door to persecution, and no man can tell where it will stop. If we are to be persecuted, it is the same thing to us whether it be on this *new* principle of *guarding the church*, or the *old one*, of destroying us as *heretics*, those useless branches of a tree, which are to be *gathered into bundles and burned*.

Since our security, my brethren, arises from enlightening the minds of our countrymen, and teaching them not to *fear where no fear is*, we should never cease representing our case; not doubting but that an impartial public will at length see the hardship of it, and condemn their own injustice towards us.

Is it to be believed that all remains of persecution shall now be banished from France, and continue much longer in England? Is the prime-minister of that country at this very time a Protestant,* and will it be thought that a Dissenter ought not to be a justice of peace, or even an exciseman, in this? It is true that for some time we have been behind several nations with respect to toleration. But as we formerly took the lead in this respect, and set an example to others, it cannot surely be long before we follow the example they are now setting us. The good sense and high spirit of Englishmen will not long bear the reproach of it.

The greatest injuries, however, may be continued if no

* M. *Necker*, who in 1788 had a second time been appointed Director-General of the Finances. See his *Historical Review*, 1791, p. 22.

complaint be made; and there are great numbers in this country who really think that we have nothing to complain of; who take it for granted, that in England religious toleration is complete, and that no person is, directly or indirectly, a sufferer on account of his religion. Let these persons, therefore, only see that this is not the case, that Dissenters, *as such*, are subject to heavy penalties, and unreasonable and disgraceful disabilities, and they will feel for the honour of their country, and remove them. This, however, is not to be expected at the first representation; for they may not immediately give sufficient attention to it; but assuredly they will in the end, when the case shall be thoroughly and generally understood: and for this, *time*, and consequently *perseverance*, is necessary. But surely the object is well worthy of such perseverance. The honour of our country, as well as our own advantage and that of our posterity, requires it of us. We therefore fail in our duty in all these respects, if we desist from the application we have begun to make.

Let us be thankful to the Dissenters in London* for taking the lead in this business; and let not the cause languish for want of their being zealously seconded by their brethren in the country. If there be any spirit of emulation among us, let it not be said that this cause was gained by their exertions alone, without the aid of ours in conjunction with them.

They invite us to join with them, and make one common effort, in a common cause, that it may appear, that what is done is not the wish of *a few* only, but of the general body of Dissenters throughout the kingdom; that we have none of us lost sight of our civil rights, though we have been long deprived of them; and that though, like peaceable subjects, we have quietly borne our exclusion from them, we are ready to take every favourable opportunity of asserting them. If the injury must continue, still let it be seen that we are *sensible* of it, and that we tax our country with ingratitude and injustice in their treatment of us. At present a great majority of the nation do not know that they are guilty of any injustice towards us; and if they knew it, would heartily join in redressing it.

This is a business in which *all* Dissenters are alike concerned. For all of us, whether classed with *Presbyterians*,

* The *Deputies* from the Three Denominations. See their *Proceedings*. In 1792, their committee was joined by *Delegates* from the Dissenters in the different counties. But there appeared no encouragement again to attempt the *repeal*.

Independants, or *Baptists*, or whether coming under no particular denomination at all; whether we be Calvinists or Arminians; Trinitarians, *Arians or Unitarians*,* we are equally *men* and *Englishmen*, and therefore equally entitled to all the natural and just rights of men and Englishmen; and as becomes men and Englishmen, we ought to assert them, at least by reminding our countrymen that we are intitled to them, and that we have a claim on their gratitude and justice. Otherwise, we do them injustice; as they may say, they would have done their duty, if they had been apprized of it.

Let us not, however, forget that our character as *Dissenters* is subordinate to that of *Protestants*, and the character of Protestants to that of *Christians;* and also that, notwithstanding all our differences in doctrine or discipline, the things in which we all agree are of infinitely more consequence than those in which we differ. We all agree in the belief of the great principles of natural and revealed religion, in the doctrine of a God, and a providence, and also in the divine mission of Christ; and in consequence of this, in the certainty of the resurrection of the dead, and a future judgment, when *all men will receive according to their works*. In these great articles, in comparison of which all others are as nothing, all who are called *Christians* agree with us; and on this account we should consider them all as *brethren*, the *Catholics* themselves not excepted. We are all expectants of the same common salvation, and if we be equally pious, virtuous, and sincere, shall, no doubt, equally attain to it.

But as *Dissenters*, we all equally disclaim all *human authority in matters of religion*. We all agree in acknowledging *one Father even God*, and *one Master even Christ;* and with respect to thinking and acting for ourselves in all matters of religion, we agree in asserting *the liberty with which Christ has made us free*.

In this great principle also many of the *Catholics* of this country now heartily join us, and therefore they ought to class with *English Dissenters*. And as they at the same time disclaim all temporal subjection to any foreign power, they are intitled to all the privileges of other British subjects. With their religious opinions we have nothing to do; and with respect to what has been the conduct of the Catholics in former times, it does not become us to *visit the sins of the*

* See *supra*, p. 76, *Note*.

fathers upon the children, who have repented of, and forsaken them.

Let us, then, agreeing in the belief of doctrines of so great importance, respect one another, as embarking in the same great cause, both of *religion* and *liberty;* and, as having one common interest, let us join all our efforts to obtain the same end.

This is not a combination to injure any, not even those who oppose us. For when, in promoting the repeal of unjust laws, we assert our own rights, we do not infringe those of others. Nay, we consult the honour of our country, and of the Chistian name in the world at large. By our perseverance the eyes of our enemies themselves cannot fail to be opened, and they will then thank us for contributing to remove the odium under which, through their ignorance, they have hitherto laboured; and they will only regret that, for want of reflecting upon the nature of the case, they had not, of themselves, and without any application from us, the merit of doing us justice: for it is only *justice*, and not any *favour*, that we now solicit. For their sakes, therefore, as well as our own, it is our duty to persevere in our application for the repeal of these injurious and unjust laws, by which *Christians* are deprived of any of the rights of *citizens*.

Lastly, while we join in asserting our own rights, let us not be unmindful of the rights of others, especially the common rights of *humanity*, of which the poor negroes have long been deprived, being treated as brutes, and not as men,* and also of the just claims of all men to the rights of a *free and equal government*. Let us, with our prayers and good wishes at least, aid a neighbouring nation,† and all who are now struggling for liberty, civil or religious, throughout the world; that *the voice of the oppressor may every where cease to be heard;* that by this means we may see the nearer

* See "Sermon on the Slave Trade," *supra*, pp. 363—389.

† *France*, where the *Bastille* had been destroyed, July 14, this year. It is remarkable that the destruction of this *King's Castle*, under which name I once heard Mr. Burke, in the House of Commons, regret that prison, had been expected from the supposed patriotism of Louis XVI., six years at least before its well merited demolition by popular vengeance.

I have now before me a volume entitled, "Mémoires sur la Bastille, Par M. *Linguet*, Londres," 1783. A *frontispiece* represents lightning striking the ruins of the prison. Amidst these ruins appears a whole length statue of the king. On the base is inscribed, "A Louis XVI., sur l'emplacement de la Bastille." Before the statue a group are supplicating; whose request the king, extending his sceptre, is thus supposed to grant: *Soyez libres: vivez.*

approach of those glorious and happy times, when *wars shall cease to the ends of the earth*, and when *the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of God and of his Christ.*

REFLECTIONS ON DEATH:

A

SERMON,

ON OCCASION OF THE

DEATH OF THE Rev. ROBERT ROBINSON,

OF CAMBRIDGE,

Delivered at the New Meeting in Birmingham, June 13, 1790,

And published at the request of those who heard it, and of Mr. Robinson's family.*

[*Birmingham*, 1790.]

PREFACE.

It will be seen that nothing could have been more unexpected than a call to preach this Sermon. But such an opportunity of impressing the minds of my congregation with just sentiments concerning *death* and the proper *business of life*, I thought was not to be neglected, and their partiality prevailed upon me to publish, what I composed for their use. It was also a tribute that I thought was due to the memory of a very worthy, and a very extraordinary man, though one with whom I had no previous acquaintance.

The editor of the work that Mr. Robinson was printing at the time of his death,† will, I doubt not, be able to give

* Though this Discourse is said to be published at the request of Mr. Robinson's family, it may be proper to observe, that this was only in the letter mentioned in the Preface, which was written even before it was delivered, and therefore by no means implies their approbation of the particulars contained in it. I have since found that some things advanced in it, require to be corrected. *(P.)* *Advertisement* at the end of the Sermon, 1790.

† The History of Baptism. See *infra*, p. 409, *Note.*

some more particulars than I am acquainted with, and also a correct account of his publications.* Being of a studious turn, and having acquired a habit of composition, it is probable that, if he had lived long, he would have written much; and it cannot be questioned but that the public would have derived great benefit from his labours. But, by his own account to me, he had not reached his fifty-fourth year.†

As this is not a proper *Funeral Sermon*, delivered in the presence of Mr. Robinson's family and friends, but was the result of the impressions made at the place where he died, it by no means supersedes such a discourse as is usually given in the place where a deceased minister has preached.

Whoever be employed on that mournful occasion,‡ I join my prayers with his, that the great Being who is *the Father of the fatherless, and the widow's God*, may comfort all who mourn on this occasion, and that Mr. Robinson's place, as pastor of the congregation, may be filled by another equally qualified, and equally assiduous in discharging the duties of it.

May all ministers of the gospel, of every denomination, devote themselves, as he did, to the service of the congregations entrusted to their care. Like him, and like Paul before him, may they *not shun* (*Acts* xx. 27) "to declare the whole counsel of God," and *feed the flocks over which they are overseers;* that, "when the chief Shepherd shall appear, *they may* receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." 1 *Peter* v. 4.§

* See the "Chronological Catalogue, taken from the end of Dr. Rees's Sermon," in "Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Robert Robinson. By George Dyer, late of Emanuel College, Cambridge," 1796, pp. 478—485.

† This must have been a slight mistake, as by Robinson's own account he was born Sep. 27, 1735, O. S. See *infra*, p. 415, *Note* †.

‡ "Dr. Rees preached two sermons to the congregation at Cambridge [which were published]. The afternoon discourse turned on *the union of good men in the future world*, from a text peculiarly calculated to impress the audience, as it was one of the last on which their deceased pastor had discoursed to them: 1 *Thess.* ii. 19. Dr. Toulmin, then residing at Taunton, paid a tribute of respect to the memory of his friend." *Brief Memoirs*, prefixed to "Miscellaneous Works of Robert Robinson. By B. F." *Harlow*, 1807, I. p. cxiii. See Dyer's *Memoirs*, pp. 421—425.

Among "those ministers, both of the Baptist and Independent denominations, with whom Mr. Robinson had long been in the habits of friendship, and who, with their congregations, had been often edified by him from their respective pulpits, not one was found to offer to his memory a similar token of respect." *Brief Mem.* p. cxiii.

§ The following extracts from a letter just received from one of Mr. Robinson's family and congregation, will gratify my readers, and serve as an authority for some of the particulars advanced in the Sermon.

"*Chesterton, June* 12, 1790.

"Mr. Robinson has been decaying (though we were too fond of him to suffer

SERMON.

MATT. xxiv. 46:

Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.

A VERY recent event, with which none of you can be unacquainted, or unaffected, has drawn my attention to the words that I have read to you; and I hope it will not be unprofitable, if I take this opportunity of enlarging a little on such reflections as they have suggested.

It is, indeed, an extraordinary case, that the person who, so lately as the late Lord's-day, addressed you from this very pulpit, should have died in little more than two days after, and that another should be now addressing you on the occasion. Mr. Robinson had, indeed, laboured for some time under a disorder which had greatly weakened him; but still much vigour remained; so that, judging by appearances, he

ourselves to believe it) for the whole of the past twelve months. He has not enjoyed one day's health all that time, though, as he told his physician, he had not felt any bodily pain. He became by slow and imperceptible degrees greatly debilitated; but still we had no idea of so sudden a dissolution. He had promised himself much pleasure from an interview with you. We had filled our minds with the most agreeable expectations from this journey to Birmigham, both on his health and spirits. But the hopes of all are blasted, and instead of the beneficial effects which we had foretold (so opposite has been the plan of the ALL-WISE to our views) that it seems as if he had gone from home only to die. Is it not difficult under such circumstances to say, *The will of the Lord be done?* But this our religion demands, and it is in the exercise of religion only that we can receive consolation.

"Mr. Robinson seems to have died exactly as, in the possession of perfect health, we have often heard him express a wish that he might die—*suddenly*—*softly*—and *alone*. His wishes were always a law to his family, and they feel themselves, on this principle, much reconciled to the manner of his death. May we make them the laws of our conduct in every other respect.

"Mr. Robinson was a truly great man. He has left in the hearts of all his friends, impressions which will never be obliterated. His life laid great numbers under obligations of the highest kind, whose bosoms his decease will fill with the deepest regret. No man ever taught with so much effect the benevolence and simplicity of Christianity, nor followed the steps of his great Master with more pleasure and fidelity. For many years, but especially for the last two or three of his life, he taught the doctrine of the unity of the great Cause of all things, expressly and effectually. I have often wished that a more intimate connexion had subsisted between you and him. I am sure it would have been attended with much mutual pleasure, and, humanly speaking, with great benefit to mankind at large. He certainly possessed the finest powers of criticism, judgment, reasoning, and elocution; but he had not room for the exercise of his abilities, and the world will never know what they have lost in him. But I am not going to write his eulogium. You will forgive this tribute to the memory of my most excellent and affectionate friend.

"We wish that you would take as large a share as is convenient in the ministerial part of the funeral service, and that you will, if there be no impropriety in it, preach and print a sermon on the sad occasion." *(P.)*

might have recovered, or at least have continued a long time. But after spending Tuesday in seemingly better health and spirits than he had done since his arrival among us, after eating his supper on the evening of that day with as much appetite as usual, and retiring without any complaint, he was found dead in his bed the next morning; and, by what was observed, he must have expired pretty early in the night.* He had not himself, it is evident, any apprehension of his life being in danger; and though it appears that his friends had for him, it was by no means of such immediate danger.

What is more particularly awful and instructive in the event, is its being so *sudden*, and, consequently, so *unexpected*. Happy will it be for us, if, like him, we be found *always ready*; that whenever it shall please God to call us hence by death, we may have done the duties of life, and receive the blessing pronounced upon the *faithful servant* in my text, whom his Lord, after a time of absence, found doing what he had been ordered to do.

As the parable is an instructive one, I shall recite the particulars of it. Our Lord, after foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem, and also his own coming to judge the world, (the time of which he himself did not know, but only that it would be sudden and unexpected, like the coming of the flood upon the old world,) exhorted his hearers to watchfulness. "Therefore," says he, "be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when

* "He died at Showell-Green, near Birmingham, in the house of William Russell, the respected friend of Dr. Priestley, at the age of fifty-four years and eight months: and was interred by that worthy man, in the Dissenters' burying ground, at Birmingham, with every token of affectionate respect." Dyer's *Mem.* pp. 398, 399. "Several of the Dissenting ministers of the town attending his funeral." *Brief. Mem.* p. cxii.

"No tender consort's aid was near;
No children caught the parting pray'r;
No friend received the last request;
No friend the closing eye-lid press'd.
Yet not to barbarous regions borne,
By bigot hands his limbs were torn,
Nor were the last sad rites unpaid,
Nor sleeps he with the vulgar dead:
The sons of freedom o'er his bier,
Hung in attentive silence lost;
Dropt o'er his grave the generous tear,
And precious held his dust."

Dyer's *Monody* in his *Mem.* p. 401.

he cometh, shall find so doing;" that is, superintending his affairs, and those who were employed under him. "Verily, I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant shall say in his heart, my lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

This, my brethren, represents the situation of all mankind. We are all the servants of God and of Christ. We have all a certain duty appointed us to do; and, having received our instructions, we are for the present left to our own conduct, our Master not appearing to give us any farther directions, or interfering in the least with us. But the time will certainly come when we shall be called to give an account of our conduct; and we shall then receive according to it. And this time is quite uncertain, on purpose, no doubt, that we should be always on our guard. For, with respect to us, *after death* comes *the judgment*. Then the time of our probation expires, and the books of our account are shut up; there being *no work, or devise, no wisdom or knowledge in the grave, whither we are all hasting*. And when we awake at the general resurrection, it will only be to receive sentence according to what we have done, whether it shall have been good, or whether it shall have been evil.

In these circumstances well may we cry out with the apostle *Peter*, [2 *Ep.* iii. 11,] "What manner of persons ought *we all of us* to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?" Certainly, we should live as those who expect to die. Because, die we must; and this care should be unremitted, because none of us can tell when it will be. We cannot tell what a single day, or even an hour, may bring forth. But though this event be unfixed with respect to our knowledge of it, it is absolutely fixed in itself, and with respect to God. For he has not only *appointed to all men once to die*, but, as we read in the book of *Job*, [vii. 1,] There is "an appointed time to *every* man upon earth."—*He has fixed bounds which we can neither pass nor remove.* [*Job* xiv. 5.]

On this interesting subject I shall make a few observations.

1. All men naturally put off in their own thoughts the time of their death, and secretly flatter themselves with the

hope of long life. Though they see others, in the same circumstances with themselves, called away by death, every day, some by diseases, and others by sudden accidents; and though these events sometimes give them alarm, it presently vanishes, and they resume their former projects, which often look far into futurity, with as much confidence as ever; and they begin that to-day, which cannot be completed in many years to come.

Now this delusion, as it may be called, is upon the whole a happy one; for without it the business of life would not be done to any purpose. If any man was to know that he should certainly die to-morrow, or within any short and limited time, he would undertake nothing great and that would benefit posterity. Or, though some might have the magnanimity to do this, such generous principles and extensive views are not to be expected of mankind in general. They hope to enjoy the fruits of their labour, and their efforts would languish if they thought that they were only labouring for others.

The labours even of literary men, which are designed to reach posterity, would be entered upon with much less vigour, and be executed with much less spirit, and, consequently, would not have the same effect, if the authors were to know that they should die as soon as they were accomplished, without having any opportunity of knowing how they were received. Mr. Robinson had finished, and nearly printed off, a large work,* which I doubt not will be very valuable, and serve the cause of truth and of mankind; and his long-continued attention to it was probably one of the remote causes of his illness and death. But can we suppose that he would have ever undertaken it, if he had foreseen how short a time he had to live? Such labour and perseverance are not to be expected of men who have death in continual and certain prospect. The idea of long life is absolutely necessary for these important purposes; and for this reason, no doubt, it has pleased Divine Providence to keep death as it were, out of our sight, and that, in a general way, the near approach of it should surprise us.

2. The proper preparation for death does not at all depend upon our continual thinking of it. It would not only im-

* It is a *History of Baptism*, a large volume in quarto, printed by subscription; and which, it is to be hoped, the friends of free inquiry and literary merit will encourage. *(P.)* See *Dyer's Mem.* pp. 328, 341; *Brief Mem.* pp. xcix.—cvii.; *Dyer on Subscription*, Ed. 2, 1792, pp. 419—426. The *History of Baptism* is now a very scarce book.

bitter the enjoyment, but obstruct the labours of life. Let men only pursue the business of *this* life properly, and without particularly thinking of *another*, they will always be ready for it. Let men do what is right and honourable, what is beneficial to their families, their country, and the world, and at the same time cultivate a spirit of piety and gratitude to God, and a dependence upon his providence; and then let them freely indulge their views to the utmost bounds of human life, or beyond it. It will only give the greater extent, and the greater energy, to their pursuits. And though they should be carried off the stage before they have accomplished half their undertakings, death will find them prepared, and others may finish what they have begun. By this means, also, they themselves will do more than men of narrower views will be capable of.

It is, no doubt, highly necessary that men should know that they are to die, that there is another world after this, and that they should be informed what course of actions will prepare them to exchange one state for another to the greatest advantage; that by this means they may form to themselves proper maxims for their conduct in life. It is also expedient that men should think of death, and another world, so much as is necessary to make them adhere to those maxims. But an express attention to them occasionally, in a calm hour, when the business of the day or of the week is over, will impress them upon the mind as much as is necessary for the purpose; so that we may never wholly lose sight of them, and they may habitually influence our conduct, and keep us in the right path of life. And this they may do, though in the time of action they be not attended to at all.

Thus, if a man have a journey to perform, it is sufficient that he think of the object of it, so as to take his measures properly before he sets out. But after this he may pursue his journey, and with spirit too, though he should give but little attention to the end or use of it. The moment that he should take a wrong road, he would recollect himself, and recover the right one.

Such is the business of life. *Whatever our hand findeth to do*, if it be only right in itself, and proper for us to do, we should *do it with all our might*, giving our whole attention to it. But this we could not do if, at the same time, we were continually interrupted with the thought of death and another world. Thoughts of this kind would be as foreign to our proper object, and as much obstruct our endeavours after it, as the thinking about any other thing.

The constant idea of death would both diminish our ardour in the proper business of life, and lead to that *fear of it*, which, as *Paul* says, [*Heb.* ii. 15,] subjects a man *to perpetual bondage*. Let us only be careful to act as becomes accountable creatures, act the upright and honourable part in life, do our duty with respect to God and our fellow-creatures, and then, whether we think of death or not, it will never find us unprepared. It may be unexpected, but it will never be unwelcome.

It is, indeed, of all things to be desired, that death should come when we least think of it; because it spares us much distressing and useless apprehensions.* Let the best of men know that he shall certainly die at any particular period: let it be after a week, a month, a year, or any certain number of years, and he would not be half so happy in that week, month, or year, as he would be with the idea of the possibility of its being after many years, though with the possibility also of its coming within a single day.

In consequence of a man's knowing the exact time of his death, he would, no doubt, think of it continually, and he would spend much time in meditation and prayer. But this is not the proper business of human life. Meditation and prayer are only the *means* to a certain *end;* and it is very possible, in this as in other cases, to give too much time and attention to the means, and thereby neglect the end.

If the frequent thinking of death, joined with incessant reading, meditation, and prayer, were the right plan of human life, we should all become monks and nuns, shut ourselves up from all society, and, consequently, from the proper duties of it. But then we should find that our constant *thinking* about death had not at all contributed to the proper preparation for it. We should incur the sentence of the *slothful*, though not that of the *wicked* servant, and by no means that of the *good* and *faithful* one. We came into the world to do something, and not to do nothing; to *act*, and not merely to *think*. And if we act at all, we must attend to what we are about, or we shall never do it as it ought to be done.

We see, then, that there is nothing to be regretted with respect to the *suddenness* of death, but that, on the contrary,

† Since this sermon was delivered, I have been informed that it was always the wish of Mr. Robinson that his death might be sudden. [See *supra*, p. 406.] This was also the wish of Dr. Taylor, of Norwich, and afterwards of Warrington, and they were both found dead in their beds, when there was no apprehension of immediate danger, in either of their cases. *(P.)*

if we live so as that we shall have no reason to fear to die, the more unexpected it comes, the better.

3. The place, the manner, and other circumstances of our deaths, are of little moment. Mr. Robinson died at a distance from his family; and this, no doubt, would have had an unpleasant effect upon him, if he had foreseen the approach of death, and had had any directions to give about the disposal of his affairs. But this, every prudent man will do in good time, in health, and at leisure. This being supposed, and all *apprehension* of dying being precluded, his dying *from home* would make no difference, except to his friends. Let us die wherever we may, and let us be disposed of as those who happen to be about us may think proper, we shall all meet at the general summons at the last day. Whether we rise again from the remotest part of the earth, or from the bottom of the sea; whether we be consumed by fire, or devoured by beasts, birds, or worms, it will make no difference. We have no occasion to inquire into the means by which God will effect his purpose of raising mankind from the dead. *He that has promised is able to perform.* The resurrection of Christ from a state of actual, unquestionable death, is a sure pledge of ours. That was a real *miracle*, requiring a power equal to that of *creation;* and our restoration to life cannot require more.

4. The fear of death is much increased by superstition, and, strictly speaking, should not be regarded as an *evil.* It is an important part of the present system, that men, as well as other animals, should live *in succession*, and that the individuals should not continue upon the stage beyond a limited, though uncertain time. By this means the improvement of the whole species, and of the world, is provided for. As human nature is constituted, the same persons, always carrying about with them the same *habits* and *prejudices*, acquired in early life, would make very slow advances in knowledge, compared with those that may be expected of the young, who have fewer prejudices, and whose minds are more impressible than they become afterwards. And yet we cannot doubt but that this tendency to *fixedness*, with respect to *sentiments* and *character*, is another wise part of the same system. We should be greatly disappointed, and at a loss how to act, if we did not find our friends, and our enemies too, in a great measure the same to-morrow that they were to-day. It would be like an unexpected change in the properties of any other substances in nature.

Death, being the certain lot of all, should not, however,

be lamented as a particular evil. The greatest, the wisest, and the best of our species, are not exempted from it; so that it is no mark of the Divine displeasure. The *pain* attending it, in itself considered, is, I doubt not, far less than we are apt to imagine. A death properly *natural*, or from mere age, (though it must be acknowledged there are not many instances of it,) I am confident, from facts known to myself, is no more painful than going to sleep. When persons die by *disease*, there is sufficient reason to think that the last moments are generally the least painful; and what men suffer from disease we most of us know already.

The generality of mankind, who are fully employed in their several occupations, suffer very little from the dread of death. It is chiefly nursed by superstition, and the too busy imaginations of persons who are too much at their ease, and who mix together things that can never meet. The man who thinks of any thing that takes place after he has expired, such as his being laid out, the coffin, the funeral ceremonies, the close and dark grave, &c., thinks of what he cannot know any thing of, when he is dead. All that he will recollect is, that he shut his eyes on this world, and opened them again (to his apprehension immediately after) at the general resurrection. To *him* all that is intermediate, be the interval in itself ever so long, will be nothing at all. He will seem to awake from a perfectly sound sleep.

5. If death be not naturally terrible to *man*, is it still less so to the *Christian?* To him *death* has no *sting*, and the *grave* no *victory*. To him it is a moment of triumph and exultation. To him it must appear to be very improperly called *death*, since it is the gate, or passage, to a new and better *life*. To him it is, therefore, more properly a *birth*. It is a death not to *him*, but to his pains, infirmities, and imperfections, bodily and mental. And who would not wish to get rid of *them?* It is an exchange of an imperfect for a more perfect state, an exchange of the society (at least occasional society) of the vicious and troublesome, for that of the virtuous and friendly. For heaven is a state into which *nothing unclean can enter*. The "new heavens and the new earth" will be the abode of the righteous only. And if the future world, in itself considered, should be no better than the present, would not this circumstance alone make it a heaven to us?

6. The change of our *condition* by death may not be so great as we are apt to imagine. As our *natures* will not be *changed*, but only *improved*, we have no reason to think that

the *future world* (which will be adapted to our merely improved nature) will be materially different from *this*.* And, indeed, why should we ask, or expect, any thing more? If we should still be obliged to provide for our subsistence, by exercise or labour; is that a thing to be complained of, by those who are supposed to have acquired fixed habits of industry, becoming rational beings, and who have never been able to bear the langour of absolute rest, or indolence? Our future happiness has, with much reason, been supposed to arise from an increase of *knowledge*. But if we should have nothing more than the means of knowledge furnished us, as we have here, but be left to our own labour to find it out; is that to be complained of, by those who will have acquired both a *love of truth*, and a habit of *inquiring* after it? To make discoveries ourselves, though the search require time and labour, is unspeakably more pleasing than to learn every thing by the information of others. If the *immortality* that is promised to us in the gospel, should not be *necessary* and *absolute*, and we should only have the *certain means* of making ourselves immortal, we should have much to be thankful for. What the Scriptures inform us concerning a future life is expressed in general terms, and often in figurative language. A more particular knowledge of it is wisely concealed from us. In whatever it be that the happiness of heaven consists, as it is *the free gift of God by Jesus Christ*, it will exceed every thing to which we could, by any virtue of ours, lay a proper *claim*.

Our deceased friend was a most laborious inquirer after truth, but as that constituted a great part of his happiness here, so it may do hereafter. We can only wish to begin in a future world as we end here. A state of continual *improvement* is infinitely more pleasing than any *fixed state* whatever, to such beings as we are.

Let us, then, neither indulge our fears with respect to death, nor our hopes with respect to the state beyond it, too much. Let us fear God, and we need no other fear. Let us love virtue, and inure ourselves to the practice of it, and we shall have sufficient ground of hope. Let us remember that we are *men*, and not *angels;* and look for a happiness suited to *human nature*.

As many of you are, in a great measure, strangers to Mr. Robinson, whose death has been the occasion of this discourse, you will naturally wish to have some information

* See Vol. VIII. pp. 204, 205. On *Matt.* xxvi. 29, Vol. XIII. p. 311.

concerning him. But of him, as of most literary men, much is not to be known.

He was a wonderful example of a man rising to considerable eminence by his own exertions. His education was no other than that of a grammar school,* and his first serious turn was given to him by the preaching of Mr. Whitfield.† But he gradually devoted himself wholly to the work of the ministry among the Baptists, and in the discharge of the duties of it, especially in his labours among the lower ranks of people, he greatly distinguished himself. What you saw and heard of him here would give you no idea of what he had been. For, the disorder to which he had been more than a year subject, and which, it is said, was brought on by intense, and I may say intemperate, application to study, had weakened his mind, as well as his body, and, as is always the case, much more than he was himself aware of; though he still retained a fluency of speech, and a command of language, that few can boast. When he was in his prime, he used, without any art, or ostentation of oratory, perfectly

* Mr. Robinson was educated under the Rev. Joseph Brett, at Scarning in Norfolk, where the late Mr. Norris, [who founded a Divinity Professorship at Cambridge,] the present Lord High Chancellor, [Thurlow,] and most of the gentlemen of that county, received the rudiments of learning. There Mr. Robinson was taught the Latin, Greek and French languages, and he was a great favourite with his master, on account of his "large capacity, uncommon genius, and refined taste," which were the words his master used when speaking of him at twelve years of age. He added, that "he expected great honour from him in future life." This was when Mr. Robinson was intended for the church; and it does not appear that he was ever engaged in business. *(P.) Advertisement.* He was bound apprentice to "a hair-dresser in Crutched Friars" in 1749; but his master appears to have given up his indentures some time before the expiration of the term. Dyer's *Mem.* p. 11. See *ibid.* pp. 8—11. *Brief Mem.* pp. xiii.—xv.

† See Dyer's *Mem.* pp. 18—25. In *Mon. Repos.* VII. 678, 679, I mentioned my too short acquaintance with this extraordinary man, and described a curious record in my possession. It is in a copy of Jennings's "Life of Cotton Mather."

At the beginning of the book is written *Robert Robinson,* 1754, prefixed to the verse *Heb.* vi. 12. The account of his birth and parentage, and what he considered as his *new birth,* is thus written by himself at the end of the book:

"Robertus, Michaelis Mariæque Robinson Filius.
Natus Swaffhami, Comitatu Norfolciæ,
Saturni die, Sept. 27, 1735.
Renatus Sabbati die, Maii 24, 1752,
Per prædicationem potentem Georgii Whitefield.
Et, gustatis doloribus Renovationis, duos annos menses
Que septem, absolutionem plenam gratuitamque
Per sanguinem pretiosam Jesu Christi
Inveni, (Tuesday, Dec. 10, 1755,) cui sit honor
Et gloria, in secula seculorum. Amen."

His father, who appears to have been little deserving of respect, died while Robinson was an infant. *Mary,* his mother, well merited that duty and affection with which her declining age was cherished by her son, in whose family she resided, and whom she survived. See Dyer's *Mem.* pp. 3, 4, 8, 9, 11, 133, 134. Robinson's mother died "Sept. 1790, aged 93 years." *Brief Mem.* p. cxiv.

to command the attention of his audience;* and, always speaking *extempore*, he could vary his style and address, according to his hearers, in a manner that was truly wonderful. His writings discover equal powers of imagination, and of judgment. His *Sermons, preached in the villages near Cambridge*,† are remarkable for their plainness and propriety. But at the time that they were composed he had not acquired all the sentiments that he had, before he died.

What most of all distinguished Mr. Robinson was his earnest *love of truth*, and his laborious *search after it*. Educated in Calvinistic principles, he was the greatest part of his life very zealous in the propagation of them. I myself remember hearing him many years ago explaining the Calvinistic doctrine of justification, to a crowded and very attentive audience in London.‡ Mr. Lindsey's resignation of his living in the Church of England, and his writings in defence of *Unitarianism*, exciting a good deal of attention, Mr. Robinson published a book entitled *a Plea for the Divinity of Christ*,§ one of the most plausible of the treatises on that side of the question, and the only one that Mr. Lindsey thought proper to reply to.‖ For this work Mr. Robinson was very much caressed by the friends of the Established Church; and on this account, I believe it was, that he had the offer of considerable preferment in the Church of England, which, however, with great magnanimity, he rejected.¶

* As I have frequently witnessed; especially in 1782, at the Lectures he delivered on his monthly visits to London. See Dyer's *Mem.* pp. 215—220; *Brief Mem.* pp. c. ci.

† "Sixteen Discourses on several Texts of Scripture," 1786. See Dyer's *Mem.* pp. 264—269. *Brief Mem.* pp. xc.—xcvi. "Since his death there have been published four large impressions; with an additional Sermon prepared by him for the press, entitled, *No man may punish Christ's enemies but himself;* and which, for the grandeur of its sentiments, and the commanding energy of its language, may rank amongst his noblest compositions." *Ibid.* pp. xcvi. xcvii.

‡ Probably at *Maze Pond*, Southwark, where he preached "from *Rom.* iii. 24. Amongst his auditors were the late Mr. Hugh Farmer and Dr. Priestley." *Brief Mem.* p. cxxxi.

§ "In a Pastoral Letter addressed to a congregation of Protestant Dissenters at Cambridge," 1776. See Dyer's *Mem.* pp. 106—120; *Brief Mem.* pp. lx.—lxiv. *Mem. of Lindsey*, pp. 179—189.

‖ For *Robinson's* letters interchanged with *Lindsey* and *Jebb* on his sending each a copy of the *Plea*, see Dyer's *Mem.* pp. 116—119; Robinson's *Misc. Works*, IV. pp. 219—222.

¶ "Dr. Hinchcliffe, Bishop of Peterborough, Dr. Hallifax, afterwards Bishop of Gloucester, Dr. Goddard, Master of Clare Hall, Dr. Ogden, Woodwardian Professor, Dr. Cooke, Provost of King's College, Dr. Beden, now [1796] Bishop of Gloucester, at that time public orator, Dr. Tucker, Dean of Gloucester, and many others, courted his acquaintance.—Handsome proposals were readily made him, but were modestly, though firmly, rejected. On Dr. Ogden's addressing him, 'Do the Dissenters know the worth of the man?' Robinson replied; 'The man knows the worth of the Dissenters.'" Dyer's *Mem.* pp. 198, 199.

Notwithstanding his long attachment to the doctrine of the *Trinity;* yet continuing to read and think on the subject, he came at length to change his opinion, and before he died he was one of the most zealous *Unitarians.** The subject of the *Divine Unity* was generally uppermost in his mind, and he urged it not only *in season*, but as you would observe, even *out of season.* Such, also, was his power of persuasion, such the excellence of his character, and the just esteem in which he was held, that, in time, his congregation came almost universally to embrace his opinions, as I was myself informed about a year ago, by one of them, who had himself been a Trinitarian, but who was then an Unitarian.†

Mr. Robinson has long been distinguished as a *writer;* and his zeal as a *Dissenter* soon brought upon him the peculiar indignation of the friends of the Establishment. Upon every occasion of any thing being brought before parliament in favour of the Dissenters, his *Plan of Lectures on the Principles of Nonconformity*‡ (which I would take this opportunity of

* I have the happiness to think that this important change in Mr. Robinson's sentiments was, in some measure, occasioned by my own writings. For in the only letter that I ever received from him (which was in answer to one that I was desired to write, in order to invite him to preach our charity sermon) he says what, without mentioning his name, I have already quoted in the *Preface* to my *Letters to Mr. Burn:* "I am indebted to you for the little I know of rational, defensible Christianity. But for your friendly aid I fear I should have gone from *enthusiasm* to *Deism*; but a faith founded upon evidence rests on a rock." *(P.)* See *supra*, p. 406, *Note.*

In a letter to Mr. Marsom, dated May 7, 1788, *Robinson* says, "As to personality in God, a Trinity of persons, I think it the most absurd of all absurdities; and, in my opinion, a man who hath brought himself to believe the popular doctrine of the Trinity, hath done all his work; for after that, there can be nothing hard, nothing inevident, the more unintelligible, the more credible; and as this serves the purpose of implicit faith in pretended guides, priests will always try to keep it in credit. The Bible reads easy, if we consider God *one;* Jesus, the *Son* of God; and the Holy Ghost, the *influence* of God." *Misc. Works*, IV. p. 454.

† Though there is no doubt of Mr. Robinson having been an *Unitarian*, and of the greater (and especially the younger) part of his congregation having become so, during his ministry, it was not the consequence of his preaching the *Unitarian* doctrine openly, but in an incidental, but such as proved to be the most effectual, manner. What is said of his sentiments and conduct in this discourse was suggested chiefly by what was seen of him at Birmingham. *(P.) Advertisement.*

"It is however certain," as Mr. Belsham remarks, "that Dr. Priestley must have been misinformed with respect to the state of Mr. Robinson's congregation; for though many of them had become decided Unitarians, many, and perhaps the majority, thought differently." *Mem. of Lindsey*, p. 194. This sufficiently appears in their choice of *Robinson's* successor, a gentleman, whose conversation I enjoyed, several years ago, often enough to be assured, that he was a zealous asserter of the opinion of Christ's *deity*, though not then, I apprehend, a *Trinitarian.* See *Brief Mem.* p. cxlvi.

On this subject Mr. Belsham has remarked most correctly, that "this mixture of jarring and inconsistent opinions in a religious society is always to be expected where the eloquence of the speaker, and not the truth of principles, isthe bond of union." *Mem. of Lindsey*, p. 194.

‡ "For the Instruction of Catechumens," (1778,) in XII Lectures. "I. The Doctrine of Free Inquiry stated, explained, and vindicated. II. The History of

recommending to you) has never failed to be produced by our enemies, as an evidence of our hostile intentions with respect to the Established Church.* But it is no proof of the excellence of that establishment, that so acute an observer as Mr. Robinson, and who, I believe, had himself been a member of it, should come to think so ill of it. Severe as his censures are, I have no doubt of their being perfectly just ;† and in matters of *religion*, there is certainly no room for *complaisance*. Let every thing of this nature be most rigorously examined, and let it stand or fall by its own merit.

I would particularly recommend to your imitation Mr. Robinson's exemplary conduct in the education that he gave to his numerous family, not only in religion, but in all branches of useful knowledge ;‡ by no means neglecting his daughters. To their understandings his good sense taught

the Reformation. [See Vol. V. p. 436, *Note.*] III. A general View of Queen Elizabeth's Church. IV. The History of Puritanism during the Reign of James I. V. The Constitution, Officers, Worship and Ceremonies of the Episcopal Church. VI. History of the Times of Charles I. VII. The Terms of Communion, Nomination of Officers, and Discipline of the Episcopal Church. VIII. The State of Religion during the Civil Wars and the Protectorate. IX. A View of Presbyterian Church Government. X. State of Religion from the Restoration to the Revolution. XI. A View of Modern Nonconformity XII. From the Revolution to the Accession of George III." *Plan*, Ed. 5, 1781. See Dyer's *Mem.* pp. 154—163.

* During the last debate on the proposed repeal of the *Test Act*, March 2, 1790, I remember hearing, and, I think, Dr. Priestley also heard, Mr. Burke alarm the House of Commons not only by referring to Robinson's *Political Catechism*, but by reading the following document, which I now quote as annexed to the 5th edition of the Lectures:

"*Eastern Association.*

"Harlow, Essex, June 18th, 1778.

"This Syllabus, entitled, A Plan of Lectures on the Principles of Nonconformity, drawn up by our brother Robinson, has been read and approved by us at this Association, and we hereby recommend it to our sister churches.

"Signed, by order of all, by

"Morgan Jones, Moderator."

"That corrupt, narrow-minded, bigotted, inflammatory, but eloquent statesman and pensioner, took this opportunity of misrepresenting the *Plan*, calumniating the author, and also of reviling the whole body of Dissenters, on account of the approbation of a small association of Baptist Ministers, which he ignorantly and pompously termed *the Harlow Synod*. His attacks were, with great justice and spirit, repelled by that uniform and warm friend to unbounded religious toleration, *Charles James Fox*. In the House of Lords the work was respectfully mentioned by the Marquis of Landsdowne. The book became much admired, and much abused." *Brief Mem.* p. lxix. See Dyer's *Mem.* pp. 155, 162.

† Of Dr. Sturges's attempt to repel these censures, *Robinson* says, "The reverend Prebendary of Winchester, who thought fit to animadvert on this book in a series of letters addressed to his Lord Bishop of London, acknowledges the want of some revision and reformation, and in this he speaks the language of all considerate members of his community: but the subjects to be revised are the Articles, and the Liturgy, not the point, the great point, *religious liberty*, on which all the controversy turns. We object against a *constitution*, and we are answered by encomiums on the *officers* who administer it; a dignified clergyman could not say less, and a prudent bishop would not wish for more." *Pref.* Ed. 5, p. xxii.

‡ See Dyer's *Mem.* pp. 135, 156; *Brief Mem.* pp. cxv.—cxvii.

him to give the same cultivation as to those of his sons, that is, the highest of which they were capable.* Getting over a vulgar and debasing prejudice, (that women, being designed for domestic cares, should be taught nothing beyond them,) and finding his daughters capable of it, he himself taught them the learned and the modern languages, and he got them instructed by others in mathematics and philosophy. Certainly, the minds of women are capable of the same improvement, and the same furniture, as those of men; and it is of importance that, when they have leisure, they should have the same resource in reading, and the same power of instructing the world by writing, that men have; and that, if they be mothers, they be capable of assisting in the instruction of their children; to which they have generally more opportunity to attend than the fathers.

In all *labours* proper for his station, and for the public, Mr. Robinson was *most abundant*.† In this let us imitate him. Whatever our respective callings may be, let us, like him, faithfully and assidiously discharge the duties of them. Our Master is now absent, but he will in due time make his appearance. May we so conduct ourselves, as *not to be ashamed before him at his coming*. Warned, more especially, by the *suddenness* of the death of Mr. Robinson, and that of many others of which we are continually hearing, let us see that we be *always ready;* since *at such an hour as we think not, the Son of Man may come.*

* Of his daughter Julia, who died in 1787, after having well improved these advantages, he thus affectionately writes to Dr. Toulmin: "Three years the loveliest of all girls, the pride and the beauty of my family, was declining. In October she fell asleep, saying, as she reclined her head, *Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit.* Seventeen years of age, five feet ten inches high, straight as a palm-tree, a fund of wit, an innocence of manners, and a piety and virtue regulated by wise and just sentiments of the great Supreme, all, all are fled.—My dear Sir, say nothing to me; I try to acquiesce. I comfort my wife, and the rest of my family, and in collecting for them soothe myself; but this hath been a great wound. I have done; I am a parent; forgive me." *Misc. Works*, IV. pp. 251, 252.

† To recommend just notions of civil government, he published, in 1782, that *Political Catechism* which was honoured by the public censure of *Burke*. (See the foregoing page, *Note* *.) To serve the cause of justice and humanity, he prepared the petition, from Cambridge, against the *Slave Trade;* one of the earliest presented to the House of Commons; and in 1788, he preached and published a Sermon, entitled "Slavery inconsistent with the Spirit of Christianity," from *Luke* iv. 18. The preacher happily remarks, that "a proclamation of liberty to captives meets the wishes of both sufferers and spectators, and grates only on the ears of a tyrant who makes slaves, and masters who hold them in servitude."

Robinson could not be indifferent to the repeal of the *Test and Corporation Acts*. In 1788, he published a Sermon on *Sacramental Tests*, preached at Cambridge before the Deputies of the Dissenting congregations in that county. On this occasion, the injustice of civil restraints, on the ground of religious belief, was exposed with the preacher's usual ability. See Dyer's *Mem.* pp. 195, 224—231; *Brief Mem.* pp. lxxxv.—lxxxviii; *Misc. Works* IV. pp. 60—130.

The proper Objects of Education in the present State of the World

REPRESENTED IN

A DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED ON

Wednesday, April 27, 1791.*

AT THE

MEETING-HOUSE IN THE OLD-JEWRY, LONDON;

TO THE

Supporters

OF THE

NEW COLLEGE AT HACKNEY.†

THE SECOND EDITION.

[London, 1791.]

MATT. ix. 37, 38:

Then said he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

THOUGH we cannot entertain a doubt of the completeness of the general plan of Providence, and of the existence of a train of causes and effects fully adequate to the execution of every great and good purpose comprised in it, yet, judging, as we must do, by appearances, the field of usefulness of all kinds is much too extensive for the few who labour in it. And since the instruments of Divine Providence in every thing respecting *men*, are *men*, this circumstance should operate as a spur to our industry and zeal, to supply the defect. It is a kind of call from above, to leave our *sauntering in the market-places*, and come into *the vineyard*, where labour is both wanted, and is sure to find its reward.

In science, in arts, in government, in morals, and in religion, we all see the most lamentable deficiencies, and mankind great sufferers in consequence of them, and yet but

* "The last Annual Sermon." Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 193. See *ibid.* 201.

† For the origin, in 1786, and the failure of this Institution, see *Mem. of Lindsey*, pp. 281—284.

few in earnest to remove them. In all these spheres of action we see much is to be done, and but few who are able, and at the same time willing, to do it. We are all sensible how capable the condition of men, in all the respects above mentioned, is of improvement, and yet even among those who are themselves enlightened, and well-intentioned, how few are there who are sufficiently *active*, so that when they see an evil, they will seriously use their endeavours to remedy it; and when they see any great good to be attained, will exert themselves to attain it! Wealth is a much easier sacrifice than labour, and yet how little of this is well applied! What immense sums are daily squandered away on frivolous and unworthy objects, to speak in the most favourable manner, and how little of it (and much of that little with grudging, or with some sinister view, which takes much from the merit of the action) is applied to honourable and public uses; so few there are who attend to the advice of the apostle, [*Phil.* ii. 4,] exhorting every person *to mind not his own things only, but every man also the things of others!*

But the fewer there are who enter into this noble career, the greater is the glory of those who do. In whatever manner their labours may be requited at present, though instead of blessings they receive curses, and instead of favour and reward, persecution, such persons are the great benefactors of mankind, and are far from *labouring in vain.* They are, as the apostle says, [2 *Cor.* vi. 1,] "workers together with *God,*" whose services also are often requited with ingratitude; and with *him* they will have their reward in future, though not with *men* here.

As it is the great object of education to form valuable characters, and to prepare men for the most important stations in life, this subject is not improper to be attended to by those who are concerned in the support of the institution, the anniversary of which we are now met to commemorate. There is not only, my brethren, a want of great and useful characters in every department of life, civil and religious, but a want of places in which they may be formed; and were the most sanguine expectations of all the friends of our *new college* realized, it would still be inadequate to supply the void which it was intended to fill. Places of truly *liberal education* in this country are few indeed, compared to the number of those in which youth receive something that is merely called education. But, alas! in too many of them, perverted by time and various circumstances, the tendency of the systems is rather to contract the faculties of youth,

and to stifle that generous ardour towards objects of public utility, which they ought to encourage and direct.

Small, however, as is the field to which your labours are confined, yet by assiduous culture, you may raise in it noble plants, which will amply reward your labour and expense. One cedar is of much more value than many inferior trees; and should the New College but produce in philosophy one such man as *Bacon* or *Newton*, in morals a *Locke* or a *Hartley;* should it form, in a civil capacity, such a man as *Hampden* or *Algernon Sidney* in *England*, a *William Penn*, a *Franklin*, or a *Washington* in *America*, or one such an illustrious character as those which are now conducting the glorious revolution in *France;* should it, in religion, produce one *Zuinglius* or *Luther*, one *Calvin*, or (how dissimilar soever in other respects, yet sufficiently resembling one another in ability and zeal) one *Socinus* or *Lardner;* should it produce but one of those great men whose exertions in past ages have diffused that light which we now enjoy, and which our latest posterity will enjoy after us, their real value to the world will be greater than can be estimated by money; and the greatest honour will be reflected upon yourselves, who have laid the foundation of the institution.

But colleges and schools are not the only places of education. The world itself is the greatest theatre of instruction, as well as of action; and the actual wants and business of the age in which men live, form them for acting a proper part in it. Truly great minds, without any other hints than those which are suggested by their situation, will hit upon expedients to remedy abuses, and carry on improvements. Indeed few men who have made any great figure in the world have derived much advantage from what we commonly call their *education*, in those respects in which they have distinguished themselves. *Newton* did not learn his system of the world from *Cambridge*. The metaphysical and moral system of *Locke* was so far from being any thing that he learned at our universities, that it was a long time before it was received there; * and as to the still greater discoveries of *Hartley* in

* "It was proposed at a meeting of the Heads of the Houses of the University of Oxford, to censure and discourage the reading of Mr. Locke's *Essay concerning human Understanding:* and, after various debates among themselves, it was concluded, that each Head of a House should endeavour to prevent its being read in his College, without coming to any public censure." *Note* by *Des Maizeaux*, in his *Collection* of Locke's *Pieces*, 8vo. 1720, p. 284.

In the letter to *Anthony Collins*, (21 Feb. 1704,) to which this *note* is annexed, *Locke* says, referring to *those proceedings*, "I take what has been done, as a recommendation of that book to the world, as you do; and I conclude when you and I meet next, we shall be merry upon the subject. For this is certain, that because

the same field, it is only of late that they have been so much as known to any individuals either at *Oxford*, or at *Cambridge*, where he studied, and those only a few, of so bold a turn of mind, and such a spirit of free inquiry as are always regarded with suspicion and dread by those who take the lead in those places. *

Much, however, may be done in the course of education by way of preparing the minds of men for improving such opportunities for public usefulness as may occur. Only inspire the minds of youth with the love of truth, and a sense of virtue and public spirit, and they will be *ready for every*

some men wink, or turn away their heads, and will not see; others will not consent to have their eyes put out." *Ibid.* p. 285. See *Brit. Biog.* VII. p. 13.

* *Hartley* first proposed his *Theory*, in Latin, to the *Medical* Scholars of Europe, in the 2nd edition of a treatise on *Stephens's* Remedy for the Stone, entitled "De Lithontriptico," published at Bath, in 1746. To that edition he annexed "Conjecturæ quædam de Sensu, Motu, et Idearum Generatione," (pp. 52,) comprising the first 22 *Propositions*. Of this piece I gave some account in *Mon. Repos.* XIII. pp. 500, 501.

Bishop Law paid an early attention to *Hartley's* work; which he quotes frequently in his own *Theory*, especially in the 7th and last edition, 1784. He describes it as "a book well worth the pains required to understand it, as exhibiting a very curious history of the human frame, and well-founded in the main; though the ingenious author carries some points, particularly that of mechanism, farther perhaps, than either experience seems to justify, or we are at present willing to allow." P. 12, *Note.* See also his translation of King's *Origin of Evil*, Ed. 5, 1781, p. lix. For *Young's* recommendation of *Hartley's* work to *Richardson*, in 1749, see Vol. III. p. 10, *Note.* Dr. Carpenter has lately remarked that "Dr. Johnson placed Hartley's Observations as next in value to the Bible." *Examination of Bishop Magee*, 1820, p. 286, *Note.*

The *first* part of *Hartley* was early translated into *French.* I have an edition, in 2 vols. 12mo. published at *Rheims*, in 1755, *avec privilège du Roi*, and with a short dedication to *Buffon;* from whose *Histoire Naturelle* the translator has added notes on *Prop.* xxiii. lviii. lix. lxv. lxx. This translation is entitled "Explication Physique des Sens, des Idées, et des Mouvemens, tant volontaires qu'involontaires, traduite de l'Anglois de M. Hartley, M. A. Par M. l'Abbé Jurain, Professeur de Mathématique à Reims, et Correspondant de l'Académie des Sciences."

The translator having censured *Locke* for what he calls "le sentiment téméraire que Dieu puisse créer une matière capable de penser" (*Avert.* p. xviii.); proceeds to applaud *ce grand Metaphysicien*, for having proved in his *Essay*, almost to demonstration, "que nos idées, même le plus abstraites, ne sont que les effets de l'association." Rejecting the theory of *innate ideas*, as unsupported by observation and experience, the translator adds, (p. xix.,) "On peut même dire que Messieurs *Locke* et *Hartley* prouvent démonstrativement le contraire en suivant, pour ainsi dire, pas à pas, toutes les démarches de notre entendement." He afterwards considers *Hartley* as having surpassed *Locke* in the elucidation of the subject. *L'Abbé Jurain* declined to translate the *second* part, as containing little novelty, and because it advocated the *heresy* of *universal restoration.* "L'Auteur y renouvelle l'ancienne erreur des Origénistes contre l'éternité des peines de l'Enfer." (*Ibid.* pp. v. vi.)

This translation was prepared, if not first published, early in 1751, just two years after the *Observations* appeared. The translator says, probably with great truth, respecting the reception of the two volumes of the original, among the author's countrymen at that period, *ont très peu de rapport entr'elles.* He has annexed to his translation "Remarques sur l'Immatérialité de l Ame," (II. pp. 407, 433,) and "Observations par lequelles on tâche de découvrir la partie du cerveau où *l'Ame* éxerce ses fonctions." (Pp. 434—474.) These *Observations*, drawn from a number of cases in surgery, are communicated by *M. de la Peryronnie. Mém. de l'Académie des Sciences de Paris.*

good work. But if, on the contrary, their minds be cramped by systems, and thereby habituated to servitude and disinclined to think for themselves in their early years, they will be prepared to oppose, instead of favouring, any great and noble efforts.

This country and this age are justly celebrated for generosity and public spirit; but by no means beyond the value of the objects which they respect, or superior to the efforts of religion and public spirit in former times; and therefore you need not fear being taxed with folly or extravagance, with such an object as you now have in view.

The primitive Christians devoted the greatest part of their wealth to public uses, and thought it best laid out when it contributed most to the interest of Christianity. In consequence of this, all Christian churches were in a very early period amply endowed, and without any aid from government; a numerous clergy and many poor, as well as strangers and travellers, were liberally provided for. Great as the demands of the church were, they were amply supplied from the liberality of its proper friends. In later ages, superstition, no doubt, joined its influence to that of true religion, in providing for the wants, real or imaginary, of the community, and of Christian churches. Monasteries, universities, and public libraries, fully equal to the wants of all countries, were established and endowed in the most splendid manner by the munificence of individuals, without the interference of public authority; and wretched has been the state of Christianity where it has been otherwise.

Infinite, my brethren, have been the mischiefs that have arisen to religion from the compulsory payment of tithes,* or any other *dues*, as they are called, for the maintenance of the clergy, and other religious purposes. This country, beyond any other, groans under the unnatural oppression, and religion itself more particularly suffers by it. True religion requires the free and voluntary support of those who are attached to it, and nobly refuses to be maintained in any other way. What is thus extorted may be given to *superstition*, or something else that assumes the name of *religion*, but will never answer the real purposes of it. It is to be hoped that our hospitals and public infirmaries will never come under such an establishment as that of the church. Whenever that takes place, benevolence and real utility will cease together, and nothing but abuse and private interest will succeed in their place.

* See *supra*, p. 392, *Note* *.

The Dissenters, to their immortal honour, though oppressed by the compulsory support of a mode of religion which they justly dislike, are not wanting in the maintenance of that which they really approve; and being most unjustly excluded from the universities, to the founding of which their ancestors, as well as those of the Established Church, (all being then equally *Roman Catholics*) alike contributed, are not wanting in the support of places of *Academical* education, to which all persons, without distinction, have equal access, and where youth are taught the most liberal principles, both in religion and politics, at much less expense, and with far less risk to their virtue, than where they are taught (if with respect to these important subjects they are taught any thing at all) the most slavish and illiberal ones. But, my brethren, can any person's superfluity (and every person has something which comes under that denomination) be better employed than in supporting such institutions as these, that is, in planting the seeds of virtue, of genuine, unsophisticated Christianity, and of public spirit, in the rising generation?

Better, my brethren, infinitely better, were it to *die rich in such good works* as these, and thus make the world your heirs, than give wealth to individuals, for whose conduct and liberality you cannot answer, and whose independence on personal exertion may do them more harm than good. It is, no doubt, the duty of every man to provide for *his own*, and especially his children and nearest relations; but wisdom, and even true affection, will set bounds to that provision, and leave them a sufficient motive for industry and economy. Every man, however attached to his own offspring, or near relations, has a clear right to consider himself as a member of the community at large; and it is even incumbent upon him to set his successors an example of that generosity and public spirit, in which, if he be a wise and liberal man himself, he must wish that they would follow his steps.

I mention these considerations on account of the difficulties under which our institution now labours; and it is hoped that, great as they are, they will not exceed the ability and liberality of its friends, when the importance of the object is sufficiently attended to by them.

I am happy to have it in my power to attest the excellent state of this institution from my own observation: for, having attended the last examination, I can truly say that, concerned as I have been in the business of education myself, I never received equal satisfaction from any performance of the kind.

Pupils who gave so good an account of their lectures, must have been carefully instructed; and the attention that is given to the *discipline* of the College, I have reason to think, is not less than that which is bestowed on instruction. It is hoped that an institution so perfect with respect to every thing *within*, will not want support from *without*.*

The Dissenters, notwithstanding all the claims upon them, just and unjust, are a wealthy part of the community; and habits of industry and frugality, which prevail among them, will not fail to make any set of men rich. Besides, this College not being confined to Dissenters, but diffusing its liberal principles to youth in general, it is not doubted but that the liberal and wealthy of other denominations will feel an interest in it, and assist in supporting an institution which has for its object, not the benefit of Dissenters only, but that of the country at large, and of posterity in general. Far am I, however, from wishing this, or any other public institution, to be so richly endowed, as to be left independent of the utmost exertions of the tutors and managers to preserve the credit of it. We see enough of the folly of profusion in this respect, in our *English* Universities, and of the wisdom of moderation in those of the *Scots*.

I shall now proceed to point out some of the great objects respecting the state of this country, of neighbouring nations, and of the world in general, which require peculiar attention and exertion, and to which this institution of yours, small as it is, may be expected to be subservient. And I trust it will be the care of all who are concerned in directing the studies of youth, to lead them to consider themselves not only as private citizens, and to form them for the proper discharge of the duties of husbands, fathers, masters, or even magistrates; but not to forget that they are members of the larger society of mankind, and therefore should feel a real interest in whatever respects general truth, general liberty, and general happiness; and there have lately arisen important situations, which in a most striking manner call for the attention of the friends of truth, and of the greater interests of mankind; such as, in a manner, compel persons of any enlargement of mind, and general benevolence, to look beyond themselves, their own country, or their own times.

Without any spirit of prophecy in ourselves, without any uncommon degree of discernment of *the signs of the times*,

* Dr. Priestley delivered, gratuitously, during his residence at Clapton, *Lectures* on "History and General Policy," and on "Experimental Philosophy and Chemistry." See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 201.

and a little aid from the prophecies of Scripture, which always grow clearer in proportion to the near approach of the events predicted, we may all perceive that we must be at the eve of great revolutions, such as will rouse the faculties, and call forth the exertions of great numbers, at present, probably, altogether unknown. But great times and occasions form, and, as it were, create characters adapted to themselves.

It seems to have pleased God, in the course of his wise providence, to divide the affairs of men into great and distinct periods, each of which has its respective object, to which the truly wise will not be unattentive, but direct their views, and bend their efforts, accordingly. Not to go back so far as to the great period of *the promulgation of the gospel*, when God was pleased to call mankind, in a more especial manner, from a state of darkness to light, from the worship of the grosser parts of nature, to the knowledge and worship of himself, and to a purer morality, and more sublime views, than they were before acquainted with; near three centuries are now elapsed since the great period of *the Reformation*, antecedent to which Christianity was sunk into a state very similar to that of the former Heathenism; the true God and his worship having been in a manner overlooked, and the homage of Christians, divided among a multiplicity of other objects, generally dead men, called saints, their images, and even their relics. Some of the persons were even imaginary, and all of them as impotent as the objects of the preceding heathen worship; when superstition in a thousand forms had taken the place of substantial virtue.

By *Wickcliffe* in this country, by *John Huss*, and *Jerom* of *Prague*, but more especially by *Zuinglius*, *Luther*, *Calvin*, and their associates, the Divine Being was pleased to awaken the attention of many persons in this part of the Christian world, so that they could not but perceive the absurdity of this grosser idolatry. But, besides leaving untouched the corner-stone of the whole system, in *the idolatrous worship of Jesus Christ*,* besides leaving the principle of persecution

* It is remarkable that *Erasmus*, in a work patronized by the Protestant Reformers, has thus branded the disciples of Moses with *Unitarian* idolatry: "The Jewes haue none ymages in theyr temples: but they haue in theyr mynds moste fowle idoles, whyles they do ymagine the father to be—alone whan he hath in his felowshyppe the sonne, and the holy ghost. They do not therefore worshyp and honoure god, but in the stede of god they doo worshyp an idole: whiche they haue framed and made to themselues in theyr owne myndes." *Exposycyon*, p. 153. This work was dedicated by *Erasmus*, in 1533, to the father of *Anne Boleyne*. The translation, of which I have quoted a *reprint* in the last century, has the following title: "A playne and godly Exposytion or Declaration of the Commune Crede, (which in the

for conscience' sake in the same state as before, and rather strengthening the unnatural alliance between Christianity and the powers of this world, another quite new and most alarming evil sprung up, though incidentally, from the circumstances of those times. The attention of the more enlightened part of mankind being at that time more particularly drawn to Christianity, and to religion in general, the topics of which were then open to continual discussion, in almost all books, and all conversation, many persons of good sense, but destitute of sufficient patience and candour, looking no farther than the absurdities then professed by all Christians, were led to reject the whole system; and from this source has arisen such a number of unbelievers, especially in the upper and more polished ranks of life, (a number continually and rapidly increasing,) as has of late appeared not a little alarming to those who have not sufficient confidence in the power of truth, or have not been apprized of the beneficial operation even of error.

Unbelievers, however, have rendered a most important service to Christianity, and such as its most zealous friends would perhaps have been the last to do for it. They have industriously exposed the imperfections and blemishes of what was then universally considered as Christianity, and have led the more enlightened Christians, in consequence of attending to their objections, to abandon whatever was spurious and foreign to it, and which, from various sources, had, in the course of many ages, been introduced into it.

To these corruptions of genuine Christianity, and also to the evidence of the system itself, it is of the greatest importance that young men, who are likely to see the world, and have influence in the affairs of it, should in a more particular manner be made to attend. And, considering the very corrupted state of Christianity in general, and the prodigious increase of infidelity in consequence of it, there is even now a loud call for men possessed of the spirit of apostles, of confessors, and even of martyrs; men, who, without any views to this world, shall wholly devote themselves to the purification and propagation of the gospel, that mankind may again see what they had the fairest opportunity of doing in the primitive times, viz. that a firm

Latin tonge is called Symbolum Apostolorum,) and of the .x. Commaundementes of goddes law. Newly made and put forth by the famouse clarke Mayster Erasmus of Rotterdame. At the requeste of the moste honorable lorde, Thomas Erle of Wyltshyre: father to the moste gratious and vertuous Quene Anne wyf to our moste gracyous soueraygne lorde kynge Henry the .viii. Cum priuilegio." See Jortin's *Erasmus*, A. D. 1533.

belief of Christianity is capable of effectually raising men's views above this world, and making them only attentive to their interest, and that of their fellow-creatures, in another. The evidence of so clear and steady a faith in some, especially if they be respectable for their ability, their knowledge, and disinterestedness, cannot but have a happy effect upon great numbers, leading them to examine what must to them appear a most striking phenomenon; and all that our religion asks is a due attention to its evidence. For the generality of unbelievers are persons whose minds are wholly engrossed by the things of this world, by lucrative, political, or philosophical pursuits, or who, from some other motive, are disinclined to think at all on the subject of religion.

We are, in fact, in a situation similar to that of the apostles. The world requires to be in a manner *re-christianized*. For such is the prevalence of a spurious Christianity on the one hand, and of infidelity on the other, that what has been formerly done is, with respect to a great part of the world, in a manner undone, and the work is to begin again. But there are ample means of doing it, and nothing but zeal, and a proper spirit, is wanting. In another respect, also, we are now in the situation of the primitive Christians, as the friends of reformation have nothing to expect from *power*, or *general favour*, but must look for every species of abuse and persecution that the spirit of the times will admit of. If even burning alive was a sight that the country would now bear, there exists a spirit which would inflict that horrid punishment, and with as much cool indifference, or savage exultation, as in any preceding age of the world. But youth should be so trained up, as, without fear, to look for every species of ill usage in a good cause. Such is the force of truth, especially when urged by men who themselves feel the force of it, and who respect nothing but truth, that it will now, as formerly, prevail over all opposition. The world may bear down particular *men*, but they cannot bear down a *good cause;* and in the steady support of it such men will not much regard what is done to themselves.

Now, where are we to look for this zeal for the purification and extension of Christianity? Where are youth to be trained in these enlarged and generous principles? Certainly where these principles are at least professedly taught, rather than where they make no part of education at all. When young men are never instructed in the evidence of revelation, and go abroad without any proper knowledge of

it, they soon lose the little they learned of their nurses, and return finished, and generally profligate unbelievers; having had nothing solid to oppose to the ingenuity and the profane jests of the licentious wits they met with, and finding the little religion they had, an impediment to the indulgence of their passions.

It is not denied that our universities, as well as others on the continent of Europe, were sufficiently adapted to the times in which they were instituted. They formed such men, and such writers, as the age required. But if the times change, those old establishments do not, as they ought to do, change with them; and, in consequence of this, institutions which were at first highly useful, as indeed most institutions have been, (having been suggested by real and pressing occasions,) may not only cease to be useful, but grow into a real nuisance, as monasteries in all Christian countries have done.

When our universities were founded, all religion was contained in creeds, established by councils, and the articles of it were universally considered as things to be *received*, and *maintained*, or at most *explained*. Nothing remained to be *questioned*, or properly *discussed*; and as there were no unbelievers, at least none who durst avow their unbelief, it could not occur to any person, that the evidence of revelation was any necessary article of academical instruction. I believe, however, it is peculiar to our English universities to require an absolute subscription to complex articles of faith, which it is impossible they can have studied, and which it is not generally supposed that they have even read. How dangerous a practice must this be with respect to young minds, precluding all rational inquiry,* and initiating them in insincerity, at an age when it is peculiarly necessary to inculcate the strictest regard to truth and virtue!†

* According to the following directions given, on a memorable occasion, in 1793, to the students of Cambridge, by Dr. Milner, Vice Chancellor: "At present, take it for granted, that our forefathers had some good reason for steadily adhering to and supporting these venerable institutions.—It is not your time to become parties in controversial matters of religion." "Proceedings in the University of Cambridge against W. Frend, M.A., Fellow of Jesus College," 1793, p. 186.

† On his *matriculation*, or entering the University at *Oxford*, every youth of *sixteen* years of age, besides subscribing the 39 Articles, must swear to obey all the *Statutes* of the University, most of them unknown, and many of them impracticable, and also take the oath of *Supremacy*. If the scholar be but *twelve* years of age, he is required *only* to subscribe the 39 Articles, till he have attained the age of *sixteen*. "Si infra decimum sextum, et supra duodecimum ætatis annum extiterint, Articuli fidei et religionis *duntaxat* subscribent." *Excerpta è corpore Stat. Oxon.* 1721, (*Tit.* ii. *Sect.* iii.) p. 4. See Vol. X. p. 491; *Old Whig*, No. 45, 1739, I. pp. 391—400; *Dyer on Sub.* Ed. 2, 1792, p. 4; *Mon. Repos.* XIII. pp. 735, 736.

At Cambridge, on taking the degree of *Batchelor of Arts*, according to a *Grace*

It is therefore from Dissenters alone, not shackled by the fetters of our universities, that free inquiry into matters of religion can be expected. It is in such places of education as ours, and in such only, that the principles of Christianity can be properly taught, that its evidence can be fairly laid before the mind, and its genuine doctrines freely explored; and where tutors, equally enlightened and zealous, may be expected to infuse their own light and zeal into the minds of others. By encouraging this institution, therefore, you are contributing to re-christianize the world, supplying it with teachers properly qualified for this great purpose.

This great work, however, will be done. The times are fully ripe for it, and proper instruments will, no doubt, be found, whether our places of education have the honour of producing them or not. Many great articles of reformation have already engaged the attention of the learned, and their opinion, though not countenanced by power, will not fail, in due time, to draw after it that of the unlearned, and of the world at large. In fact it is *knowledge* that finally governs mankind, and *power*, though ever so refractory, must at length yield to it. The truth of Christianity in general, and that of the great doctrine of it, and of all revelation, *the Divine Unity*, cannot long remain in doubt. In both these cases, all the proper evidence either already is, or soon will be produced, and, when duly attended to, it cannot fail to have its effect. It is incumbent upon us, however, to urge every great truth *in season and out of season*, and to train up others who shall adopt, and steadily pursue, the same great purposes. It is zeal, more than knowledge, that is now wanting, and real knowledge, implying a just sense of the *value* as well as the *evidence* of truth, cannot fail, in time, to produce this zeal.

The effect of past labours cannot fail to animate the zeal of all who feel for the interest of Christianity, and the welfare of mankind, to still greater exertions; and the prospects which are now opening upon us are indeed most glorious and encouraging. We clearly see, even the infidel part of the world sees it, that the time is fast approaching, when the power of the *Pope*, the great soul of spiritual

passed in 1772, the graduate must still declare himself "*bonâ fide* a member of the Church of England, as by law established." In 1613, "the University imposed *subscription* (on *Batchelors*) at the command of that simple monarch [*James* I.], a man whom unflattering posterity has long stripped of his glorious title, Solomon." *Dyer on Subscription*, p. 4, *Note* e, p. 37. "The *subscription* is not now required, but on taking a *Master's* degree." See Jebb's *Works*, I. pp. 194—211.

tyranny, will come to an end. A deadly wound was given to it at the *Reformation*, but that wound seemed to be in a great measure healed. It continued, however, to fester, and now an universal mortification seems to be taking place. The great supports of the papal power, the orders of monks in general, and of the Jesuits in particular, together with the *Inquisition*, are nearly removed. Those princes of Christendom who for a time *gave their power and strength unto the beast*, [*Rev.* xvii. 13,] now seem disposed to strip him of it;* and that country in which appeared the last cruel effects of papal tyranny, in that grievous persecution which followed the Revocation of *the Edict of Nantz*,† can now hardly be said to be *Popish*, but to be possessed by truly *Catholic* Christians. Nay, many enlightened members of that very church which has been *drunk with the blood of the martyrs*, are the most earnest to explode not only all usurpations properly papal, but all interference of civil power in matters of religion, so as to leave no cause whatever of persecution for conscience' sake.‡

In short, we see the speedy approach of the Popes to their primitive state of simple bishops of Rome; and when their temporal, which preceded and supported their spiritual authority, shall be gone, the latter will soon follow it. When there is no power to enforce the decrees of the See of *Rome*, they will be no more regarded than those of the See of *Canterbury*, or of the church which meets in this place. Also, without power, mere *pre-eminence*, if it should be thought worth preserving, will soon be disputed; and if the preference must be given to churches *founded by the Apostles*, it must be given to that of *Jerusalem*, of *Ephesus*, of *Corinth*, and many others, rather than to that of *Rome*. As to *general councils*, held by some to be the seat of infallibility, who is there to call them, and how are their decrees to be enforced?

What an immense field of speculation and exertion is now opening to us from this source! Things cannot long continue in the state in which they now are, any more than they did when Luther began to preach against indulgences.§ The subject of *religion*, and especially every thing relating to *religious establishments*, must come under a strict examination. The political state of the world will make discussions

* See, on *Rev.* xvii. 15—17, Vol. XIV. p. 491.
† In 1685. See Vol. IX. p 19, *Note**; Vol. X. pp. 432—436, 446—461.
‡ See Vol. X. pp. 469, 470, 516, 517, *Note* †.
§ In 1517. See Vol. X. p. 92.

of this kind absolutely necessary. Also, in the great revolutions which are evidently coming on in ecclesiastical, as well as in civil affairs, *church history* must be carefully studied, as great use cannot fail to be made of it in the important questions which must now come before the public.

There will, on these accounts, be a great call for men well versed in ecclesiastical history, and in religious controversy, as well as in the theory of civil government, for at least a century to come; and where are we to look for these men, but in such places of education as that which you are now instituting? Even statesmen themselves, who have never thought on these subjects before, and who have generally affected to despise them, must now attend to them, and study them. It is what the times will render absolutely necessary. We already see them begin to enter the lists; but the advantage will always be on the side of those who have been regularly taught the first principles of these branches of knowledge, and who have been used to *theological*, in conjunction with *historical* investigations, with which the generality of statesmen are wholly unacquainted. These subjects, important as they are, since the welfare of civil society is nearly interested in them, seem to be, at present, but little understood in France, or on the Continent in general. Let us have the ambition of being their instructors; and it will not detract from our honour, if in time (as has already taken place with respect to the principles of *civil liberty*) they become our masters.

Another great event, which, I begin to flatter myself, we may be looking forward to, is the fall of the *Turkish* empire, when an end will be put to a system of government the most unfriendly to human happiness, and to improvements of all kinds, that the world has ever groaned under; a government, or rather a despotism, extending over the finest and first civilized parts of the globe, at present in a state of misery and depopulation.

Should that empire fall, what a field will be immediately opened for men of spirit, and of talents of all kinds, to explore the curious and valuable remains of antiquity, perhaps to discover ancient and long-lost writings, to ascertain the geography and natural history of ancient places, by which much light will be thrown upon histories, which will, to the end of the world, attract the attention of mankind, and especially that of the Scriptures! What a field will then be opened for the instruction of the *Mahometans*, and

extending the salutary light of the gospel to countries where at present little remains of it besides the name. The fall of this enormous power (and they are not the friends of mankind, of science, or religion, who wish its support) will probably be followed by other great events, with which the future happy state of the world is still more nearly connected; but on this subject, though with difficulty, I forbear to enlarge.*

Another and most important circumstance which calls us to attend to the proper education of our youth, is the new light which is now almost every where bursting out in favour of the civil *rights of men*, and the great objects and uses of *civil government*. While so favourable a wind is abroad, let every young mind expand itself, catch the rising gale, and partake of the glorious enthusiasm; the great objects of which are the flourishing state of science, arts, manufactures, and commerce; the extinction of wars, with the calamities incident to mankind from them; the abolishing of all useless distinctions, which were the offspring of a barbarous age (producing an absurd haughtiness in some, and a base servility in others); and a general release from all such taxes and burdens of every kind, as the publicgood does not require. In short, to make government as beneficial, and as little expensive and burdensome, as possible.

Let the liberal youth be every where encouraged to study the nature of government, and attend to every thing that makes nations secure and happy. Whatever regulations have this tendency, are equally for the benefit of the *governors* and the *governed*, because they promote mutual confidence. A tyrant, one who has the property and the lives of his subjects at his own disposal, must ever live in fear of his own, while every man will feel an interest in the preservation, and in the rank, of any person, when they have been taught to consider them as the pledge of their own security and happiness.

Hitherto the great interests of millions have, in most countries, been subject to the caprice of a few,† and even the great article of *war*, and the infinite hazards to which

* I mean the return of the Jews to *Palestine*, and the great events connected in prophecy with it. This will be the true æra of the renovation of the world. (*P.*) See *supra*, pp. 288—297.

† Who have had the effrontry to determine

"That toiling millions must resign their weal,
And all the honey of their search, to such,
As for themselves alone themselves had rais'd."

states have been exposed by it, have depended upon those who were solely governed by their private views of interest and ambition. Hence, in almost all histories, we see little more than what has been done by *princes* and *ministers of state;* and it is only from incidental circumstances that we are able to collect what has been thought or done by *the people*, what has been the progress of science, of arts, of manufactures, and commerce, by which the real welfare of nations is promoted. In general, while the people have been labouring for themselves, kings and ministers of state have, by their crooked policy, been counteracting them; and yet they have never failed to claim all the merit of what they have not been able to hinder the people from doing for themselves. There are, no doubt, exceptions to this observation; because there have been truly enlightened, and truly patriotic kings and ministers; but they have been few indeed, compared with the numbers of the weak and the selfish.*

How glorious has been the example of a neighbouring nation in this respect, by which they have, in a manner, insured peace to themselves and to other nations, at the same time disclaiming all views of conquest, and thereby cutting off almost every possible cause of war! In future history, *France* must be considered as the first of nations, for their noble declarations on this subject, especially considering how ambitious and warlike that people has heretofore been.

How glorious will it be for the British youth, and the places of education in which they are formed, to enter the lists with the heroes abroad, who have adopted these new and great objects of civil policy! And shall the youth of *Britain* be less generous and noble-minded than our brethren in *America*, or our ancient rivals in *France?* As we have vied with them in the arts of war, let us now vie with them in the arts of peace; and after having, for centuries past, most unnaturally harassed and tormented each

* What is the power of making peace and war, not for themselves, (for that would be of small consequence,) but for thousands and millions of others, whose happiness has, unfortunately, been at their disposal, in such hands, but like penknives in the hands of children, or loaded fire-arms in the hands of savages, who know nothing of the power or the use of them? *(P.)* See "Upon the Right of making War, Peace, and Alliances," *Essays*, 1701, pp. 129—237. The expectation may, I trust, be now rationally indulged, of an increasing and influential conviction among the people, that

> "War is a game, which, were their subjects wise,
> Kings would not play at."

other, let us, as becomes peaceable men, good Christians, and good neighbours, study to repair all past injuries; and, laying aside all mean and impolitic jealousy, let us exert ourselves to serve each other to the utmost of our common power.

The prevailing good sense and humanity of the present age, the rising spirit of commerce and economy, together with the sense which all nations now have of the dreadful weight of public debts and increasing taxes, enable us to prognosticate with certainty the approach of those happy times in which the sure prophecies of scripture inform us, that *wars shall cease*, and universal peace and harmony take place. This event will be the more favourable to revelation, as it will have been considerably forwarded by those who are its enemies, and who, least of all, imagine that they are labouring to fulfil any prophecy; most of them, probably, having never heard of any such prediction.

But let not all the honour of these glorious labours be engrossed by unbelievers. Let those who embrace the pure faith, and who breathe the pure and pacific spirit of the gospel, exert themselves most of all to accomplish the same end. *The harvest, truly, is great*, and there is room for *many labourers*, each with his own views, to give aid to the influence of good sense or of religion, and to get the better of a false, barbarous, and ruinous policy, that has so long governed the world, and retarded the natural progress of improvements of all kinds.

The seeds of all great improvements have been long sown in this and other countries, but much time and great care are requisite to bring them to maturity. The seeds of a purer Christianity were sown by *Socinus* and others, as early as the age of *Luther*, but, till of late, a violent bigotry has been able to check its growth. The genuine principles of civil government were taught by *Locke* and others, at the time of our *Revolution*, and, indeed, in an earlier period in this country;* and yet the natural *rights of men* are,

* Besides *Milton* and *Sidney*, by Sir Thomas Smith, in *The Commonwealth of England*, written in *Latin* and *English*, 1565; by *Buchanan*, in his Dialogue *De Jure Regni apud Scotos*, 1579; by *Phillip Hunton*, one of the *Ejected Ministers*, in "A Treatise on Monarchy," 1643, which Sir Robert Filmer attempted to refute in his "Anarchy of a limited or mixed Monarchy;" and by W. D., in "The Case of the Government of England," 1681.

Buchanan had the honour of being bitterly reproached by the panegyrist of *James* II., Father *Orleans*, for the *Dialogue* I have mentioned, and especially for the *Dedication* to his pupil *James*, of whom the historian of the Revolutions of England thus complains: "On ne peut lire, sans concevoir quelque indignation contre luy, la patience qu'il eut à souffrir l'insolence de *Buchanan*, qui osa luy dédier

by many, still disregarded, and the pretended and usurped rights of particular *classes of men*, whose interests are incompatible with those of the great majority of their fellow-citizens, are held up in opposition to them.

The great doctrine of *the kingdom of Christ not being of this world*, was preached, though not in its full extent, by the famous *Hoadly** and others, nearly a century ago; and yet this most unnatural *alliance of church and state*, as it is called, or rather that of churchmen and statesmen, (for it is highly injurious to the true interests of both church and state,) is still ostentatiously preached up, not only by divines, but by laymen.† Even different, and, formerly, hostile establishments, feel a strong sympathy for each other in their present common danger; Protestants themselves openly lamenting the fall of a popish church; as clearly perceiving that, in fact, both their churches stand upon the same ground, and justly apprehending that the same light and good sense which have been fatal to the one, cannot fail, in due time, to overthrow the other.

In the present consternation of all the friends of these establishments, they discover every symptom of the fulfilment of that prophecy in the book of *Revelation*,‡ which says, that their "kingdom shall be full of darkness," and that they shall "*gnaw* their tongues for pain," but *without repenting of their deeds*. The late writings in favour of liberty, civil and religious, have been like a beam of light suddenly thrown among owls, bats, or moles, who, being incapable of receiving any pleasure or benefit from it, can only cry out, and hide themselves when the light approaches and disturbs them. But may this light increase! And, let all who are offended by it, retire into whatever

un livre, où cet Auteur soûmet les Rois au jugement de leurs sujets, et à des peines dont la plus sévère n'est pas là déposition." *Hist. des Révol. D'Angleterre*, 4to. *Paris*, 1694, III. p. 14.

It is amusing to recollect that *James* was only thirteen years of age, and still under the rod of the preceptor, when his *patience*, on which the learned Father is so indignant, endured this dedication, from *un homme de rien*, as the Jesuit calls *Buchanan*, though he admits that he was *homme d'esprit*. Had he as patiently imbibed the political principles of the *Dialogue*, and thus left a good example to his son, *James* might have escaped the contempt of his own age and of posterity, and *Charles*, the axe of the executioner.

* When Bishop of Bangor, in a Sermon preached before George I., 1717, on *John* xviii. 36. This Sermon occasioned the *Bangorian* Controversy.

† This state of things is thus well explained by *Robert Robinson*: "Burnets and Hoadlys, and other tolerant prelates, preach rightly, but in vain. Nobody is relieved by their declamations. They live down their own doctrine; find apologies and salvos and subtile distinctions necessary, and do much damage to religion, by inventing and publishing them." *Plan of Lectures*, p. 53. See *supra*, pp. 417, 418.

‡ *Ch.* xvii. 10, 11. See, on *vers.* 8—11, Vol. XIV. p. 485.

holes they think proper. May the sons of this institution eagerly catch, and wisely direct this beam of sacred truth, and let them apply it, like *Ithuriel's* spear, to every object without distinction, whether of a civil or a religious nature!

In this steady and fearless pursuit of truth, let them be taught to despise alike the contempt of the pretended philosopher, and the rage of the bigot. But let them be apprized that there is no wisdom or advantage in *throwing pearls before swine;* and that, when prejudices of any kind are become inveterate, all labour is in vain. Let them be taught that the chief objects of their instruction are the young, like themselves, and especially those in the middle classes of life, such as those of whom the converts to Christianity, in the early ages, generally consisted. The lowest of the vulgar will not easily be brought to think on subjects that are wholly *new* to them, though of the greatest importance; but every means should be used to excite their attention, and to prepare them for religious instruction. As to persons in the highest classes of life, they are chiefly swayed by their connexions, and very seldom have the courage to think and act for themselves, though they have the most glorious opportunity of distinguishing themselves by so doing.

But while we are endeavouring to extend the boundaries of light, and to contract those of darkness, let us be thankful to Almighty God, on a comparison of the former times with the present, on account of the great superiority in our favour. Infinitely is our present civilization superior to the barbarism of the feudal times, when nothing was gained for the people (for those who *studied to be quiet, and to mind their own business)* but by forced concessions from kings or nobles; when princes in temporals, and priests in spirituals, left nothing of rational liberty in the world; and when death, in the most frightful forms, was the sure consequence of every attempt of men to think for themselves, or to enlighten the minds of others.

Let us also make all due allowance for the prejudices of others, those who live in darkness, in the midst of the growing light of the age. For, though many of those who are the enemies of liberty, civil or religious, are governed by their secular interest, and are determined, notwithstanding their convictions, to oppose all improvements, others really think *they do God service* in opposing *innovation.* Let us consider that all great improvements in the state of society ever have been, and ever must be the growth

of time, the result of the most peaceable, but assiduous endeavours in pursuing the slowest of all processes—that of enlightening the minds of men; and that, after all, this noble end has seldom been attained, without great sacrifices, from generous and disinterested individuals, who, though the greatest benefactors of mankind, receive no reward in the present world, but in the gratitude of posterity, and in heaven.

Let us, however, assiduously cherish this generous magnanimity in young minds, and educate men, not for themselves only, but for their country and the world. Our Saviour faithfully apprized his disciples, [*Matt* x. 22,] that *they would be hated of all men for his name's sake*, and that they must look for their recompence "at the resurrection of the just." Let us not, then, deceive any man, and least of all, the young and unexperienced, but fairly give them their choice of the honourable service of mankind, and of God, with the approbation of their own minds, and the hope of future glory, or of the emoluments of this world without them. It will be easy to a tutor, who himself feels as he ought to do, to infuse his own generous sentiments into the minds of his pupils, and send them forth ardent in every public and good cause, with no idea of *living to themselves*, but inspired with zeal and fortitude, and, at the same time, conducted by prudence, to turn their backs on the inglorious vale of pleasure, and to climb those arduous steeps, on the summit of which they will find *the temple of virtue*, and through that, *the temple of honour*, and the road to immortality.

Let me add, that we should be the more assiduous in the instruction of our youth, in order to supply the place of those valuable characters of which death is continually depriving us; that *instead of the fathers there may be the children*, equally enlightened, and equally zealous in the cause of truth and virtue. It is impossible not to feel the force of this consideration in a peculiar manner, when we reflect on our recent loss of so excellent a man as Dr. Price;* a man whom we need not hesitate to call an ornament of his profession, of his country, and of his age; a man, who, for the most unaffected simplicity, the strictest integrity, the purest patriotism, and the most extensive benevolence, perhaps never had a superior, and but few equals.

Every man who distinguishes himself will be proportion-

* Who died April 19, 1791, aged 68. See the following *Discourse*.

ably exposed to calumny, and so was Dr. Price, especially on account of a most excellent *discourse*, delivered from this pulpit;* a discourse glowing with the most exalted sentiments of civil and religious liberty,† and received with the loudest applause, by a nation lately awakened to a just sense of their value, and calumniated by those who never knew, or had lost all sense of it. As to calumny in a good cause, we may easily despise it, when we consider that it was the lot of our Saviour, and of Paul. Such censure is the greatest praise, because the surest mark of merit. When time shall have extinguished prejudice, it will be deemed no small blot in any character, how excellent soever in other respects, to have thought or said ill of Dr. Price, and no small subject of boasting, to have been known to him, and respected by him.

May the students of Hackney College, who have had so good an opportunity of knowing Dr. Price, be more especially fired by his example, and ambitious to supply his place. And I trust that our loss, though great, is far from being irreparable. We have many young men among the Dissenters, who promise as much as he did at the same early period of life; and such are the superior advantages, the increasing light, and the increasing spirit of the age, that, with the same zeal in the cause of truth, of virtue, and of general happiness, they may see farther; and, as obstacles of all kinds daily give way to vigorous efforts, they may effect more than he was able to do. He has sown that they may reap, and, at the same time, by sowing still more, prepare for a still greater harvest in succeeding ages.

* "November 4, 1789, to the Society for commemorating the Revolution in Great Britain." See *Memoirs of Price*, 1815, pp. 153—155; Vol. XIV. p. 233. For this Sermon, as is well known, Dr. Price was grossly insulted by *Burke*, whom the destruction of the *King's Castle*, as he correctly styled the *Bastille*, appears to have maddened into fury; though he was sufficiently *himself* to secure a pension, a boon from his new political associates, the men whom he had so often exposed and vilified.

Dr. Price "added a few notes to the last edition of this *Discourse*, in answer to some of those despotic principles of *Burke* which had long been exploded by the more enlightened part of mankind, but never deigned to defend his own principles, or to notice the abusive language with which they had been assailed." *Memoirs of Price*, p. 173.

I heard *Burke* in 1790, assail Dr. Price, in the House of Commons, with those eloquent invectives, which he shared with Dr. Priestley and *Robert Robinson*. See *supra*, p. 418; *New An. Reg.* XI. p. 91.

† "Noble sentiments," says *Fox*, on this Sermon, "worthy of an enlightened philosopher, who is unconfined by local attachments, and glories in the freedom of the whole human race." *Fox*, however, considered such subjects "as unfit for the pulpit." See his *Speeches*, 1815, IV. p. 68; *New An. Reg.* XI.

A DISCOURSE

ON OCCASION OF

THE DEATH OF Dr. PRICE,*

DELIVERED AT HACKNEY, ON SUNDAY, MAY 1, 1791.

[London, 1791.]

LUKE XX. 38:

He is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him.

WE are now, my Christian brethren, assembled on the mournful occasion of the decease of a truly excellent man, one who stood in the endearing relation of pastor to this congregation, but in a much more important relation to his country, and even to the world. If, after this, I may add, as an excuse for those who have made choice of *me* to address you on the occasion, he was one with whom I had been connected by an acquaintance of more than thirty years, and an intimate friendship of more than twenty.† In consequence of this, I have never failed to occupy his place of preacher to you, on my annual visist to the Metropolis; and if a circumstance, which adds something to the impression on my own mind, may be mentioned on the occasion, this is the very day on which, if our friend had been alive and well, I should, of course, have preached for

* See *supra*, p. 439. Dr. Price was buried at Bunhill Fields, April 26, "in the same ground with his wife and uncle, [who had been a colleague of *Watts*,] the funeral service having been performed by his amiable and intimate friend Dr. Kippis, in a manner most solemn and impressive." *Memoirs of Price*, by *William Morgan*, F.R.S., 1815, p. 180.

I may here justly apply to Dr. Price what Mr. Lofft says of that eminent Christian and enlightened politician Dr. John Jebb: (*Biog. Sketches*, in Disney's *Memoirs*, p. 246:) "his remains were followed by a numerous attendance of friends to his private and public virtues.—I then saw the illustrious appearing with added dignity; every order in the state joining in the spontaneous tribute —and every eye and bosom giving an open testimony, on the termination of a life devoted to truth, freedom, and every best interest of human society."

† See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 44, 80, 97, 114, 116.

"On the next Sunday after the funeral, Dr. Priestley preached a Sermon on the occasion, to a numerous audience; nor was it possible that any one could have been found better qualified to pay this last tribute to his memory, than the person who, for more than thirty years, had enjoyed and deserved his highest esteem and affection." *Memoirs of Price*, pp. 180, 181.

him. Little did I expect, when I set out on my journey, that this would be his *Funeral Sermon;* for at that time there were hopes of his recovery, and about a month before, there was no more appearance of his approaching dissolution, than there is of that of any of ours at present. For though he was not of a robust constitution, and was drawing toward the usual term of human life, he had of late years recovered a better state of heath and spirits than had generally fallen to his share; so that, judging by appearances, he might have lived happily to himself, and usefully to the world, many years longer. May the reflection lead us all to the true wisdom of *considering our latter end*, that we may hold ourselves in constant readiness for our summons hence; since, at such an hour as we think not, that summons may come.

But, my brethren, though the occasion on which I am addressing you be a mournful one; and, having the feelings of men, it is impossible not to be affected with grief, (which, to a proper degree, it is not only becoming, but useful to indulge,) we *grieve not as those who have no hope*, but with a mixture of joy and exultation. For, though we are ordinary men, and not Stoics, we are also Christians, and not Heathens; and, therefore, we can adopt the language of our Saviour, which I have read to you; intimating that, notwithstanding the inroads that death is constantly making upon our race, though multitudes are every day carried from the state of the living to the regions of the dead, *all live unto God.* In his eye, who regards the certain future as if it was actually present, all who *are* to live again, *do* live again; and this comprehends every individual of the human race, from our progenitor Adam, to those who shall be alive at the consummation of all things. More especially since *Christ died, and rose again*, all who *sleep in him*, or who, like our friend, die in the faith, the hope, and the practice of the gospel, *shall God bring with him*, at that great day when our exalted Saviour shall return in glory; and by that power which distinguished him before his ascension, viz. the power of God his Father, he shall raise all the dead, and, by divine appointment and direction, shall give unto every one according to his works.

Nay, as the apostle Paul informs us, they who shall be alive at that great day, shall have no advantage over those who shall be asleep. For the dead in Christ shall rise first; and then, not before, shall they who are alive be changed, and rendered immortal like their deceased brethren. At

that glorious period, which, to each of us, will appear to arrive very soon, we shall see our friend again, and, I trust, have a happy meeting with him, in far more pleasing circumstances than the present, never to be separated more.

In the passage of the gospel from which my text is taken, our Saviour is proving the truth of the resurrection to the *Sadducees*, a sect among the Jews who denied it, but who yet believed the divine mission of Moses, and admitted the authority of the Scriptures, as we now call them, of the *Old Testament*. He observes, that a considerable time after the death of the patriarchs, *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, the Divine Being, speaking to Moses, calls himself *their God*. But, says our Saviour, God "is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him." That is, since, though they are dead, they are to live again, God, who sees into futurity, regards them as if they were already raised from the dead, and speaks of them as if they then stood in the same relation to him that they ever did, or should do.

I make no remark on the force of the argument. It was addressed to *Jews*, and, therefore, it was sufficiently to the purpose, if it had weight with them. But we *Christians* have a clearer and stronger evidence of a resurrection, viz. that which is afforded by the declarations of Christ, confirmed by miracles, and especially by his own resurrection from the dead; an event which, judging by the usual rules of estimating the value of human testimony, we may venture to say, is better authenticated than any other event in history.*

Let unbelievers be, what many of them pretend to be, *philosophers*, or serious inquirers after truth, and into the causes of things; let them not, as they generally do, reject the gospel history without inquiry; but let them examine its authority as they would that of other historical books, and determine accordingly. The means of forming a rational judgment are fully in their power; and certainly no question can be so interesting to us all as whether what we now see be all that we have to look to, or enjoy of life, or whether, after we have been dead, we shall be raised again to a new and immortal life, in which we shall be happy or miserable, according as we have lived, virtuously or not, in the present state.

To this future state, as I am now addressing an assembly

* For this I refer to *A Discourse on the Resurrection of Jesus*, which will soon be before the public. *(P.)* See *supra*, pp. 325—348.

of Christians, who entertain no doubt of it, let us now, my brethren, direct our attention; and from it derive the instruction and consolation which the consideration of it is calculated to afford us. Our friend, though dead, in the eye of God is alive: his past and his future existence may be said to be equally present to the Divine mind; because both are equally certain. We know the past, and thence may in some measure anticipate the future; as, from the seed-time, we form a judgment of the future harvest; and the Scriptures assure us, [*Gal.* vi. 8,] that, as they who in this life *sow to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; so they who sow to the spirit*, who live that spiritual and virtuous life which the gospel prescribes to us, *shall of the spirit reap life everlasting*; and if so, we can have no doubt but that our departed friend will have changed his condition for the better.

The virtues of Dr. Price, I may say, without being charged with extravagant panegyric or flattery, which should be far from this sacred place, as it was remote from his pure and simple mind, will live in the memory not only of the present, but of future generations. For few persons in the private walks of life, in no public office or employment, and wholly remote from courts, were ever more generally known, or respected. His labours made him in pretty early life the benefactor of mankind. Not only was his object in his more abstruse mathematical studies, the benefit of his countrymen, by reducing to greater certainty, and setting in a clearer light than had ever been done before, the doctrine of *Annuities*, and many interesting subjects, for which thousands in this country have reason to thank him; but so ardent was his zeal for the natural rights of men, and so forcibly and effectually did he plead the cause of liberty, civil and religious, that no inconsiderable proportion of the human race acknowledged his writings to have been of eminent use to their attainment of those great blessings; and the most august assembly in the world, by which I wish to be understood the *National Assembly* of France, have justly styled him *the apostle of liberty*. Not that he added much to the clearness of its principles; but strongly feeling their force, he inspired all his readers with the same ardent love of it, and zeal for it; so as to make liberty appear more desirable, and tyranny more detestable; and in this respect, *though dead, he yet speaketh.*

In the writings of Dr. Price, men and citizens may ever see their rights, and magistrates their duty; and so plainly and forcibly are these lessons given, that our children may

understand and feel them. That the great end of civil society, and the object of all civil government is the public good;* that every form of government is excellent in proportion as it is adapted to gain this end, that all persons employed and paid by the public, are the servants of the public, that they are accountable to the public, and of course punishable for their neglect of duty, are now considered as *axioms*, as indisputable as any in geometry; and the writings of Dr. Price have contributed more than those of any other person, I may almost say, living or dead, to make them generally understood, and what is more, to their importance being truly felt.

It may be considered as an universal truth, that no man can rise to great eminence without having enemies in proportion to it; and few men have had more of this honourable appendage to real merit than Dr. Price. He long stood the object of reproach and calumny to the interested tools of power, to the prejudiced, and to the timid. And on this account some may think it necessary to apologize for his conduct, in the writings to which I now refer, especially as his profession was that of a preacher of the gospel of peace. But I cannot *apologize* for public virtue, and public spirit, in any man. It is universally praise-worthy, and a just subject of encomium.

Whatever else we be, we are all members of society, and citizens of the world; and as such, we are bound to consult the public welfare, as far as we have an opportunity to promote it, which was eminently the case of Dr. Price. His character and his writings gave him access to men in power, and who have influence in public affairs, not only in *England*,

* The following passages will shew that Dr. Price's speculations on this subject adventured very far out of the common road.

"The advances and discoveries made within the three last centuries are, indeed, wonderful, and may well lead us to expect an approaching general amendment in human affairs. The light which has been lately struck out will probably increase; and the more it increases, the further will free inquiry and generous sentiments spread; the harder will it be for established corruptions to maintain their ground; and the more the way will be prepared for the downfal of all slavish hierarchies and governments, and for the introduction of those times, when truth and liberty shall triumph over all opposition, when nation shall no more lift up a sword against nation, every false religion be destroyed, and *the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ.*

"I cannot think it necessary that the world should continue for ever divided, as it is now, into a multitude of independent states, whose jarring interests are always producing war and devastation. A scheme of government may be imagined that shall, by annihilating property, and reducing mankind to their natural equality, remove most of the causes of contention and wickedness." He then refers for "an account of such a scheme" to *Wallace's* "Various Prospects of Nature, Mankind and Providence." See *Diss.* I. pp. 137, 138, *Note;* "Various Prospects," 1761, No. II. pp. 37—51; *Mon. Repos.* II. pp. 517—520.

but also in *America*, and in *France*, not to mention other countries; and his wise counsels were not always without effect. But persons in less conspicuous situations are justifiable, and more than justifiable, for their endeavours to serve the public, be they more or less attended to; and in every *free*, that is, in every equitable and just government, the voice of every man interested in it will be heard, and attended to in proportion to his interest.

These duties respecting the public, need not to interfere with those of a more private nature. Did our deceased friend, notwithstanding his attention to politics, neglect any part of his duty as a minister of the gospel, or a member of society in any other respect? You know that he was ever exemplary in them all. Was the strain of his pulpit discourses ever factious? Did they tend to make you discontented with government, or inflame your passions against those who had the administration of it? You know the contrary. The mild but warm benevolence of his own heart he diffused into yours. It was his business and delight, on all occasions, to inculcate the great duties of piety and resignation to God, and good-will to all men, together with that happy equanimity which prepares the mind for all events, prosperous or adverse, public or private. You could not, I am confident, leave this place, after attending his services in it, without feeling yourselves more meek and placid, more disposed to forbearance and forgiveness, than to revenge.

No Christian minister can teach his congregation the whole of their duty, and leave out that class of duties which are owing to society, and the magistrates of it; and *duties* have a necessary connexion with *rights*. These, therefore, Dr. Price did not do wrong to explain; and as his own mind was thoroughly enlightened in these respects, I take it for granted that, on proper occasions, he endeavoured to give that light to you, and with that light a proper degree of warmth; but as this warmth was ever tempered in his own mind by reason and moderation, it would in that state be communicated to you.

As an Englishman, and one who always felt strongly when he saw clearly, Dr. Price faithfully warned his countrymen of the danger arising from the increasing weight of the *national debt*, which for a long time seemed to alarm only himself; but which we all now see must work either our reformation, or our ruin.

Dr. Price was also the first, the loudest, and the most incessant, in his cries against that most cruel, unjust, and

impolitic war with our brethren across the Atlantic, which terminated, as he foresaw, in the establishment of their liberty, and the doubling of our debt. In all this, was he the enemy of his country, as he was then considered? Nay, was he not its greatest friend?

These consequences of this ever-memorable war, with respect to *England* and *America*, Dr. Price foresaw, and foretold;* but he did not foresee what has been in a great measure another consequence of that war, and of the establishment of liberty in America. I mean the emancipation of France from their arbitrary government, without war, and by the natural operation only of those burdens which former wars, and former follies and extravagancies, similar to our own, had brought upon them. Living, however, to see this great event, as the friend of mankind, he gloriously exulted in the prospect of the inestimable blessings which must accrue from it to that great nation, and of those which, to his enlarged mind, it opened of the extension of liberty to all Europe, and finally to all mankind. And, as if he had foreseen his own speedy dissolution after these great events, in a discourse which was received with the greatest applause by all the friends of liberty, and for which he incurred the boundless reproach of his enemies,† he adopted the song of old *Simeon* in the gospel, [*Luke* ii. 29, 30,] "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace—for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Considering the share which Dr. Price had in these events,‡ (with which also he was continually reproached by the friends of arbitrary power,) it may be compared to the death of a warrior in the moment of victory.

But from one species of reproach and abuse, to which most declaimers against government are subject, Dr. Price was universally exempted. His bitterest enemies, in their greatest violence, never taxed him with it. I mean his having interested views. His patriotism, though warm, was ever of the purest kind, looking to nothing for himself; and when he had the freest access to men in power, never using it for his own emolument, or that of his nearest friends. In this situation he conferred favours, but never received any. So generally was his character in this respect known, that when he gave a great part of his time to the service of his country, in calculations, for judgment and accuracy in

* In "Observations on Civil Liberty, and the Justice and Policy of the War with America, 1776." See *Mem. of Price*, pp. 57—60.

† See *supra*, p. 440.

‡ See *New An. Reg.* (1789,) X. pp. (126)—(129); *Mem. of Price*, pp. 153—157.

which, he was the only man particularly looked up to by those who composed the legislature of his country, no pecuniary reward was ever thought of by him, or for him. He gave his labours in the same disinterested manner to several private societies who wished to establish funds for the benefit of their posterity, and in return had nothing but the warmest acknowledgements for the most important services. In calculations of this kind the merit of Dr. Price stands unrivalled, and would be alone sufficient to transmit his name with the greatest respect to future ages.

In this disinterested manner did Dr. Price uniformly act, though his circumstances were by no means what the world would call affluent, considering that he lived near the metropolis, and in the society of the most opulent in it. But his style of life was of the simplest kind, and he was rich, as almost any man may be, by his moderation and economy. From a moderate income he had a very considerable surplus, in the distribution of which he was most judicious and liberal. When, in my great intimacy with him, I was some years ago remonstrating against one particular instance of his liberality, he told me he made it a rule to expend one fifth of his income in some form of charity, and only wished to produce the greatest good by it; but that, had he had children, he would have contented himself with giving a tenth.

Here, my brethren, is an example worthy of imitation by the most opulent among you, and which, as Dr. Price is now dead, I think it not amiss to hold out to you, and to the world. But, alas! the greater part of those who are possessed of wealth, instead of enlarging their fortunes, and their means of doing good, by diminishing their wants, and their expenditure, are ever stretching them to the utmost bounds, and beyond the bounds of their incomes, though the evident consequences of this conduct, is their own infinite embarrassment, and a total incapacity of doing good to others. This, however, is a duty incumbent upon all who have, or who might command, the means of it; a duty enjoined by that great Being who, for the wisest purposes, viz. for promoting general virtue, for the exercise of patience, humility, and gratitude in some, and of generosity in others, has appointed that inequality which we see to prevail in the conditions of men on the face of the whole earth.

Such glorious characters, however, there are in the world, though little known in the bustle and glitter of public life;

persons who spend even more on others, than they do on themselves; who really consider themselves as merely stewards of the bounty of Divine Providence, and almoners of the Almighty, entitled only to their portion for their care of the distribution. Such was Mr. Howard, the intimate friend of Dr. Price, and such are others, whose names it is their wish to remain unknown, but which will be proclaimed *at the resurrection of the just*, when *they who have sowed bountifully shall also reap bountifully*, and when they who are rich now, but who make no generous or wise use of their riches, will wish that they had been poor. The good deeds of such men, though buried in oblivion now, all *live unto God*. They are preserved in the book of his remembrance, and in that book the characters are indelible, as the volume is imperishable.

Dr. Price's piety, which is the surest foundation of all virtue, was not less, though it was less conspicuous, than his benevolence. The peculiar fervour of his devotion, ever expressed in the most natural and unaffected manner, you must have constantly observed in the pulpit, and in all his public services of which *prayer* made a part, and the deep sense that he had of the constant presence and providence of God was always apparent in his conversation on religious subjects. But such marks of strong devotional feelings as he discovered when he was under less constraint, in the more private devotions of his family, (of which some of his more familiar religious friends must have been occasionally witnesses,) I have seldom seen in any other person; and as he was too apt to look at the dark side of things, sentiments of the deepest reverence, and the most entire submission to the Divine will, were most predominant on such occasions. I can compare the earnest manner in which he always expressed himself at those times, to nothing but what we may conceive to have been that of our Saviour in the garden, when, in prayer to his Almighty Father, he said, *Not my will, but thine be done.*—No doubt he felt more intensely still in his more private devotions, when, with or without the use of words, he poured out his whole heart to *his Father who seeth in secret*. It was evident to all his acquaintance, that his devotion was both intense and habitual, the idea of God and of his providence being never long absent from his mind. No person well acquainted with Dr. Price could say, that rational sentiments of Christianity are unfriendly to devotion.

Perhaps the sentiments of no man's mind were ever more

clearly perceived in the natural expression of them, than those of Dr. Price. It was impossible to converse with him, and not apply to him the character which our Saviour gave to *Nathaniel*, of *a man without guile*. Such simplicity of manners, with such genuine marks of perfect integrity and benevolence, diffused around him a charm, which the forms of politeness can but poorly imitate. Accordingly, his society was coveted by those who were bred in courts, as superior to any thing they found in the most polished circles.

As a preacher, without any thing that is termed *oratory*, he never failed to gain universal attention; and what he delivered in his plain and artless manner, coming evidently from the heart, made a deeper impression than those discourses which are heard with the loudest bursts of applause. I am confident that all that you who have attended upon his ministry can wish for in a speaker, is such a delivery as his, which to appearance had nothing in it that was striking, or peculiarly excellent, because it was unstudied.

In mentioning these particulars, my design is by no means to deliver a panegyric, but to speak for your instruction and edification. But a discourse on occasion of the death of so excellent a person as Dr. Price is necessarily of this nature, and I flatter myself it will prove more really useful, than if I had more strictly confined myself to the consideration of death, of future judgment, or any other of the topics which are usually insisted upon on these occasions. I shall, therefore, without any farther apology, proceed to mention some more particulars of extraordinary merit in our deceased friend, and such as deserve general imitation.

Notwithstanding Dr. Price's *ability*, which, however, was the least article in his praise, and the confidence which, on that account, he might be supposed to place in his own judgment, which no man took more pains to form, he was remarkably diffident of himself, and in public controversy his naturally ingenuous temper led him to express his doubts in the frankest manner; and though, when he thought his argument well-founded, he made use of pretty strong language, he did not think the worse of his antagonists in a moral respect. The topics on which he engaged in controversy with myself were those on which it is well known that he laid peculiar stress.* He thought some of them to be of great importance even in a practical view; and yet my

* See their *Correspondence*, 1778, Vol. IV. pp. 5—121.

openly differing from him with regard to them, made no change whatever in his respect for me. Nay, if I might judge from appearances, which in him were never deceitful, it increased that respect; nor, which is another usual effect of public controversy, did he in consequence of it become more tenacious of the opinions for which he contended. Judging by the same sure appearances, he became in consequence of it more doubtful, and on many occasions, with his usual ingenuousness, never scrupled to acknowledge it, though it did not appear that his opinions were materially changed. That this circumstance did not diminish my respect for him, is not to be wondered at. Besides, I did not lay the same stress on the points in dispute that he did. In real candour, I question whether Dr. Price ever had a superior.

The greatest defect in Dr. Price arose from an excess of this amiable virtue of candour. He could hardly see a fault in those to whom he was much attached. Of this pleasing foible I myself was happy to have the advantage.

Dr. Price's extreme unwillingness to disoblige any person, was the occasion of no small trouble and embarrassment to him. His well-known public spirit and benevolence, brought upon him many applications for advice and assistance, and many requests of personal inverviews, which he did not know how to decline. In this case alone did he want firmness of mind. In the cause of truth, or public liberty, no man had less concern about what any person thought, or said of him; but he could not, without great pain to himself, do any thing that had the appearance of being unkind, or uncivil. On this principle he sacrificed much of his own ease and satisfaction to that of others. He often complained to me, and I doubt not to others of his friends, of his want of resolution in this respect, and the great loss of time, which he could very ill spare, by this means.

Humility is a virtue nearly allied to candour and benevolence, and I never knew a person less sensible of his own excellencies, or so little elated by the great celebrity to which he attained, (and this was greater than any Dissenting minister ever acquired before him,) as Dr. Price was.

But with the greatest disposition to please, and to comply with others as far as he innocently could, he never made a sacrifice of his opinions to complaisance, but on all proper occasions openly avowed every important principle that he

held. Conversing much with the world at large, and of course with many unbelievers, he always appeared a zealous Christian, and with bigots, a rational one; so that to the latter he was, from very early life, an object of dislike; and his zeal for what are usually called liberal opinions in religion, was as great as theirs for those of an opposite kind.

Though, among other things, he differed from me with respect to *the person of Christ*, no man laid more stress than he did on his being a *creature* of God, equally with ourselves, and no more an *object of worship* than any other creature whatever.* Also, though he held the opinion of *a soul* distinct from the body, we were both agreed in its being the clear doctrine of the Scriptures, that there is no state of perception, or action, between death and the general judgment. This interval he fully expected to pass as in a profound sleep, and not to awake but (to adopt the figurative language of scripture) at the sound of that trumpet which shall awake us all; when we shall at the same time see our Lord Jesus Christ coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.

In the mean time, as our resurrection and future life are certain, *we all live unto God.* In his eye, our departed friend is neither *dead*, nor *sleepeth.* His faithful servant, though reduced to dust, every particle of which will soon be dispersed, is not forgotten by him, but is destined to receive the reward of his labours, in that state of enjoyment, and generous activity also, to which he continually looked. In the mean time, to use the accurate language of the apostle Paul, [*Col.* iii. 3, 4,] his "life is hid with Christ in God;" but "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then," though not before, "shall *he* also appear with him in glory."

His faith and his practice let us, my brethren, continually follow. Otherwise, our condemnation, and especially yours who had such frequent opportunities of edifying by his instructions and his example, will be greatly aggravated. But, adhering to his precepts, and following his example, we may anticipate by faith the joyful time of our meeting him again, overlooking the interval which now separates us, the greatest part of which will appear to us to be nothing at all.

* Was not Dr. Price then as strictly a *Unitarian* as Dr. Priestley? See *supra*, p. 76, *Note.* It is remarkable that when Mr. Fox, in 1792, moved for the repeal of the Penal Statutes against the impugners of the Trinity, he stated, that "the persons for whom he interceded were Unitarians, some following the doctrines of Arius, others of Socinus." Fox's *Speeches*, 1815, IV. p. 423.

Let us also please ourselves, as we know he did,* with the prospect of seeing and knowing one another again, and renewing the pleasing intercourse we had together here; when the subjects of our present doubts will be cleared up, especially those prejudices and misapprehensions which are the greatest obstacles to the exercise of mutual charity, and when, seeing the causes of former differences, we shall see greater reason for mutual candour, and in the continuance of our existence, shall have no obstacle to a perfect good understanding and mutual happiness.

If we may be allowed to indulge ourselves in a reflection not of the most serious nature, but suggested by a review of Dr. Price's labours; supposing the amount of the expectation of life to be in my case, as I find, about fourteen years, in many of you not more than half that number, and at the most not much more than twenty in those whose age admitted of any long acquaintance with him, and the interval between the time of our death and that of our resurrection to be nothing at all, because not perceived by us, it is in effect only fourteen, or about twenty years that we can expect to be separated from him; and in this life we often pass more time without seeing those whom we most respect; but with the idea of seeing them again, and of their not being unhappy, we are not distressed at their absence.

How then ought we to be affected who, as Christians, not only *hope*, but firmly *believe*, that in so short a space we may see our deceased friend again, and be able to tell him what he will be as eager to learn, how those things about which he most interested himself, respecting the welfare of his country, and of mankind, went on after his death; and such is the prospect that is now opening upon us, respecting the enlargement of civil and religious liberty, and the extension of general happiness, that the longest liver will probably have the best news to carry him.

Let such be the use that we make of his valuable labours, in estimating the probable duration of human life. *Let us so number our days, as to apply our hearts unto wisdom.* Death is often considered not in too *serious*, for that is impossible, but in too *gloomy* a light; when to Christians, for whom it has *no sting*, it ought to appear in a pleasing one.

* See Dr. Price's *Dissertations*, Ed. 4, 1777, (No. III.,) "On the Reasons for expecting that virtuous Men shall meet after Death, in a State of Happiness." It has been re-printed by the Unitarian Society. The first publication of this *Dissertation* and that *On Providence*, in 1769, occasioned Dr. Price's acquaintance with the Earl of Shelburne, afterwards Marquis of Landsdowne. See *Mem. of Price*, pp. 31, 32.

As a release from pain, from trouble, and a thousand distressing uncertainties, to which we are now subject, it is unquestionably desirable; and of the close of life men have (not indeed naturally, or necessarily, but too commonly) little enjoyment. It is too often a burden to themselves, and to others; and, is it not desirable to be released from that burden?

Was it not better for our deceased friend to be at ease in death, than in a state of pain, or imbecility; and what prospect was there of his life being much more valuable to himself or others? Surely, then, the near approach of a new and a better life, in which *corruption shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality*, was a most desirable thing with respect to himself, and therefore ought not to appear otherwise to us.

Though I have no doubt myself that old age, without disease, and with the use of our rational faculties, is the most desirable period of life, most abounding with real satisfaction; when the tumult of passion is subsided, when reason has gained its proper ascendancy, and when traces of numberless former impressions make intellectual pleasures more exquisite, as well as more lasting, than those of sense have ever been; this is the happy lot of very few, and therefore ought not to be expected by the generality of mankind. Consequently, after the period of usefulness is over, the close of this scene by death is not a subject of regret, but of desire; and the pains which accompany, or rather precede, death, do not in general exceed those to which we are frequently exposed during the course of our lives. Therefore they are no subject of particular complaint. Those of our friend, indeed, at the close of life, were often very severe, but he bore them with the greatest patience and fortitude; and while he was able to converse, he was so far from complaining of what he felt, that he was frequently expressing his gratitude to God for his distinguished favour to him, and in the severest agony kept saying, that the goodness of God was unquestionable.*

Let us, however, my brethren, patiently and thankfully receive whatever lot, pleasurable or painful, it shall please Divine Providence to appoint for us; confident, as we well

* "These dreadful agonies were borne for a month nearly, with a resignation which never uttered a sigh nor a murmur; and to the last hour of his life, this good man retained the same placid and benevolent temper of mind which prevailed throughout the whole course of it." Such is the testimony of an affectionate relative and a near observer. See *Memoirs of Price*, pp. 176, 177.

may be, that whatever it be, it is for the best; that nothing can come to pass, not even a sparrow fall to the ground, without the will of God. If, as our Saviour has said, [*Matt.* x. 30,] *even the hairs of our heads are all numbered*, much more are the years of our lives. God has *fixed a bound which we cannot pass.* Though our own mistakes, or those of others, and conduct which we deem to be imprudent and injudicious, be among the means of fixing this period of our lives, we should not forget that there is a will above ours, and which comprehends ours, and that to the Great Being whose will it is, nothing is either accidental or unseasonable.

To repine at the proceedings of Divine Providence, is to arraign the wisdom or the goodness of God. It implies a suspicion that the course of things has taken some wrong turn, and that the Divine Being has not been sufficiently attentive to us, or to our concerns; and can any thing be more justly displeasing to him than this?

On the contrary, resignation does honour to God. It *gives glory to God*, by believing him to be what he is, and being fully impressed with that belief. It is the language of a heart fully persuaded that God is infinitely wise, powerful, and good; and that he gives unremitting attention to all the works of his hands. A person in the habitual exercise of it, feels and acts as becomes a creature in his situation, under the government of a Being who cannot mistake concerning him. He does not start out of his proper sphere, or *question God foolishly.* Let us, then, mourning as we cannot help doing on the present occasion, nevertheless, adopt the pious language of *Job*, [i. 21,] "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

More especially, let us not so lament the past, as to despair of the future, as if, when we lost great and excellent men, no others were to arise in their places. When the elders of Israel were lamenting the destruction of the magnificent Temple erected by Solomon, rich in gold and silver, which they could not command after their return from the Babylonish Captivity, God sent his prophet to tell them, [*Hag.* ii. 8, 9,] that *gold and silver were his*, and that *the glory of the latter house should exceed that of the former.*

In like manner, my brethren, *talents* and *zeal* are God's, as well as gold and silver; and he can raise up men possessed of them, whenever the purposes of his providence require them; and, as such men will always be wanted,

no doubt there is a provision made for a succession of them, though we may not know when, or where they are to arise. Much good work is yet to be done in the great vineyard of God, but he cannot be at any loss to find labourers properly qualified for it.

Is the present race of men, or of ministers, inferior to the last? It is no great compliment to them to say that they are superior. Nay, it would be a great reproach to us, if it was not so, considering the advantage we derive from the labours and example of those who are gone before us. And, for the same reason, the next generation, enjoying the light that has been struck out by the present, and having every faculty that nature gives to improve by it, will, no doubt, do so, and distinguish themselves in every laudable pursuit more than we have done. As the church of Christ, we are assured, will never fail, so also faithful, laborious, and enlightened ministers of his church will never fail. By their labours and example, this church will be edified, and its boundaries extended, till, at length, it shall enlighten and bless the whole world.

Let us, therefore, acquiesce in this sovereign will of God concerning our friends, as well as ourselves, and let us less lament our loss in the present case, than be thankful for the instruction we have received from our departed friend, and for the example which he has set us. You of this congregation will long remember his faithful and affectionate labours. In them, it is to be hoped, he will long speak with effect; and that, at the great day, the faithful pastor, and the well-instructed and improved hearers, who have often joined in Christian worship, and who have mutually edified one another here below, will make part of that church which shall then be gathered from all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, and be complete in Christ their head.

The particular friends of Dr. Price, and all who justly valued themselves on account of their relation to him, to whom his behaviour was eminently kind and affectionate,* will be expected to distinguish themselves most by the emulation of his virtues, that the connexion which commenced here may be resumed and continued in a better state. Let the young, in particular, be stimulated by his example, to supply his place. As, by the wise appointment of Providence, all men die, and one generation is

* See *Memoirs of Price*, pp. 178, 189.

removed to make way for another, may every succeeding generation, benefited by the experience of the former, be more wise, more virtuous, and more happy.

It will be the lot of very few indeed to occupy so important a station in society as that of our departed friend; but every man has some *talent* to improve, and we are all accountable for whatever we receive. Let no man, therefore, *hide his talent in a napkin*, but make the best use of it in his power, and he may be assured of meeting with proportionable favour from our common Master, when, after his present absence from us, *he shall return, and take an account of his servants.* May we all, my brethren, so conduct ourselves in life, as that, though we be not entirely *without spot and blameless, we may not be ashamed before him at his coming;* but having repented of the sins we have committed, and having used our best endeavours to approve our hearts unto God in an uniform course of upright intentions and worthy actions, *we may find mercy of God in that day;* and, together with our departed friend, may hear the joyful sentence, *Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord.**

* The "Short Sketch of the Life of Dr. Price, with an Account of his Publications," annexed to this Sermon in 1791, will appear in a subsequent Volume. I here subjoin, from the *Minute Book* of the *Gravel-Pit Meeting*, two documents, which record the commencement and the close of Dr. Price's interesting connexion with the congregation at Hackney. The notice of his death is in the handwriting of my esteemed and regretted friend the late Mr. Benjamin Travers, who was then treasurer of the congregation.

DEAR SIR, *Newington Green, Jan. 3, 1770.*

I shall be obliged to you for informing Mr. Cotton and the other Gentlemen who have subscribed my invitation, that I accept of it; and that I sincerely thank the Congregation for that favourable opinion of me which has led them to call me to discharge the duties of a Minister among them. May God enable me to discharge these duties in a manner that shall be most likely to answer the ends they have in view, and to promote their best interests.

I am, Dear Sir, with hearty wishes that your comfort and usefulness may be long continued, and with great esteem,

Your obliged, humble Servant,
RICHARD PRICE.

To *Jasper Maudit*, Esq. *(Chairman)*.

On Tuesday, 19th April, 1791, this Congregation, and the world at large, experienced an unspeakable loss in the death of the Rev. Dr. Price, after an illness of nine weeks.

B. T.

A particular Attention to the Instruction of the Young recommended,

IN

A DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED AT THE

GRAVEL-PIT MEETING, IN HACKNEY,

DECEMBER 4, 1791,

ON ENTERING ON THE

OFFICE OF PASTOR

TO

The Congregation of Protestant Dissenters,

ASSEMBLING IN THAT PLACE. *

[London, 1791.]

PREFACE.

HAVING recommended the separate instruction of children and young persons in the following Discourse, and many of my friends having expressed their wishes that I would give a particular account of my conduct in this respect at Birmingham, I shall take this opportunity of doing it. But I must previously observe, that I have more than once changed my methods, and may see reason to do so again. Besides, no one person's custom will exactly suit another, especially in a different situation. In all these things we must be guided by our particular dispositions, and the cir-

* On consulting the *Minute Book* of the congregation, I find that Dr. Priestley thus expressed himself in answer to their invitation, dated Nov. 7, 1791:

"My Christian Friends,

"After having been driven by violence, highly disgraceful to the Government under which we live, from a situation on every account most pleasing to me, and my connection with one of the most flourishing and respectable congregations in the country being thereby broken; I think myself happy and honoured, by an invitation to succeed my most valued friend, and your late excellent Pastor, the Rev. Dr. Price.

"My only wish is, to have it in my power to exert myself most effectually in what appears to me the most proper and most important duties of the Pastoral Office; especially in the particular attention that I wish to give to the younger part of the congregation, according to the plan that I pursued at Leeds and Birmingham.

"With my best wishes and prayers for our mutual edification, I am, my Christian Friends, your very humble Servant,

"J. PRIESTLEY."

cumstances in which we find ourselves. What I did in the last years of my residence at Birmingham was as follows.

I distributed the younger part of the congregation into three classes; the first consisting of those who were from about five or six to ten or twelve years of age; the second, of those who were from ten or twelve to sixteen or eighteen; and the third, of those who were between that age and thirty. The first and last of these classes I instructed about nine months in the year, omitting my lectures to them when the days were the shortest, as I attended the first of them before the morning service, and the last immediately after the evening service. But the middle class, which attended between the two services, I kept up all the year round.

In the first class I taught my own *Catechism for Children and Young Persons*, and the first part of *Watts's Historical Catechism*, as altered by myself. I also made them repeat *Watts's Hymns for Children;* and when the class consisted of too many for all of them to repeat the hymn, I selected two or three by lot to do it, or made them recite the separate verses by turns.

In the second class I taught the second part of *Watts's Historical Catechism*, and my own *Scripture Catechism*, the object of this class being to make the children well acquainted with the Scriptures. With the same view I also taught them *Scripture Geography*, by means of maps, which I had drawn and engraved for that purpose. Each of the children had a copy of the map, with names upon it, but in the lecture-room they pointed to the places on the map without any names.

In teaching the *Scripture Catechism*, I never confined myself to the questions printed in the book, but divided most of them into a great number, and likewise introduced many others, which, if they had carefully read the portion of scripture to which they were directed, they would readily answer. I closed this lecture either with an exercise on the map, or with requiring them to find the place in which mention was made of some remarkable fact, or which contained some important sentence, which I recited to them, the person who first found it beginning to read. This exercise, exciting emulation, was always particularly interesting to the young persons; but I made it a rule that, when any one person had been the first to find two passages, he should not speak any more. Otherwise the exercise might have been confined to a few who were more expert than the rest. The younger part of this class I commonly exercised by naming

any particular chapter or verse, and requiring them to turn to it as quickly as they could.

To this class I gave every month or six weeks a subject to write upon, such as abridgements of particular portions of scripture history, the enumeration of remarkable events in particular lives, as those of *Abraham*, *Jacob*, *David*, &c., in the *Old Testament*, and *Peter*, *Paul*, and others in the *New;* an account of miracles performed by particular persons, or of any particular kind, as those of *Moses*, *Elijah*, *Daniel*, &c.; the instances of Christ healing particular diseases, as blindness, leprosy, fever, &c.; accounts of men eminently good, and of others eminently bad, &c. &c. &c. Such exercises as these it will be very easy for the teacher to point out, and diversify in a great variety of ways; but the object of all of them should be to make the pupils well acquainted with the Scriptures, and especially the historical parts of them.

Lastly, at the distance of about once a month, I gave to those who composed this class, particular portions of scripture, or some psalm or hymn, to get by heart, which I made them repeat by lot.

To the third class, I lectured from my *Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion*, and also my *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, reading a portion of those works, and enlarging upon it extempore. At one time I read a short course of lectures on *Jewish Antiquities*. In this lecture I encouraged the pupils to ask me any questions whatever; and before I entered upon any lecture, I asked many questions relating to the subject of the preceding, so as in reality to go over the same ground twice. But I never looked to any particular person for an answer, lest some might be discouraged; and if no person made any answer, I explained the same subject again myself.

To this class I gave subjects of greater difficulty to write upon, such as the marks of the wisdom of God in the creation, arguments for a future state, a summary view of the resurrection of Jesus, and other parts of the general evidence of revealed religion, as also views of the rise and progress of the corruptions of Christianity. These exercises were not absolutely required of any person, but were given voluntarily by those of the pupils who had the greatest ability and the most leisure. If any person chose it, I undertook that no person should see his exercise besides myself; but in general, those who brought exercises had the privilege of seeing those of their fellow-pupils.

I hardly need to observe to my brethren in the ministry, that I had more satisfaction in attending these classes than in any other part of my ministerial duty, seeing the progress my pupils actually made in religious knowledge. Whereas the effect of preaching to a mixed audience is at best slow and uncertain; and young persons, whose minds are most susceptible of impressions of all kinds, seldom feel themselves much interested in them, and consequently give little attention to them.

That the preceding are the best methods that can be taken to promote the religious instruction of youth, I am far from asserting; but that they are capable of answering this end to a considerable degree, my own experience, of many years, sufficiently proves. If the great object, which is the instruction of youth in the principles of religion, and especially to make the Scriptures (which are the source of all religious knowledge) familiar to them, be kept in view, adequate methods of gaining it will not fail to suggest themselves. An upright intention, and good will to the work, from a sense of its importance, joined to the idea of its practicability, is all that is really requisite. The practice itself is easy, and success certain. If any person, through distrust of himself, have doubts with respect to the last of these classes, there cannot be any with respect to the two first, and they are of the greatest importance, as the foundation of every thing else.*

* Since this Sermon and the Preface have been printed off, I have received a letter from one of my late congregation at Birmingham, which gives such an account of the conduct of the young persons belonging to it, as fully proves the utility of the plan of instruction I have here recommended, and verifies what I have said of them p. 459. I have therefore been advised to subjoin an extract from that letter, and the *Resolutions* of the congregation contained in it, as an encouragement to other ministers to adopt similar plans.

Speaking of a sermon, which was preached on Sunday the 11th instant, for the support of the Sunday-Schools belonging to the congregation, my correspondent writes as follows:

"The children made a charming appearance—there were 195 of them. All the girls, having caps and tippets, appeared as though in a uniform; and the boys, being remarkably clean in their linen, and decent in their clothes, were in no degree a disgrace to them. Your young men have so zealously followed your advice in instructing these children, by preaching to them (if you will excuse the expression) and praying with them every Sunday afternoon, that I thought it right the congregation should testify the pleasure it gave them; and accordingly several *resolutions* have been passed this afternoon, which I will copy, as I think they will give you pleasure, and afford an incontrovertible proof, in the objects they allude to, that you have not laboured in vain, but may expect a rich harvest from the good seed you have so diligently sowed amongst us. May the blessing of God render your labours at Hackney equally successful!

"Extract from the Minutes of a Congregational Meeting of the Subscribers to the late *New Meeting*, held on Sunday 11th Dec. 1791.

"Resolved, That it appears to this meeting, that the young persons of the congregation, who have so diligently and wisely exerted themselves in the conduct

DISCOURSE.

2 Cor. xiii. 9:

This also we wish, even your perfection.

Being honoured with a call to the office of Christian minister to this congregation, I shall take this opportunity of explaining my views with respect to the object and end of it. But, not to fatigue your attention too much, I shall omit what relates to the ordinary and well-known duties of all Christian ministers, and confine myself to some particular methods which, with your approbation, I wish to introduce, in order more effectually to gain this end. And these are not mere projects, the success of which might be doubtful; but what I have employed to the greatest advantage in former situations of some continuance.

In the last of these situations I was peculiarly happy; and, while I live, I shall retain the most pleasing remembrance of it. In what manner it pleased Divine Providence, which orders all events, to remove me from it, is not, I presume, unknown to any of you. It was the hand of violence. But whatever was the part that *man* acted in it, we should never forget that there is the hand of *God*, as well as that of man, in all events; those in which the worst of men are the agents, and in which their worst passions are

of the Sunday-Schools, deserve the warmest acknowledgements of the society; and that it would be proper for the congregation to express their commendation of the practice which the young men have established, of preparing and delivering an address (in turns) for the instruction of the children, and of going to prayer with them every Sunday afternoon.

"That the visitors of the Sunday-Schools belonging to this society be desired, in the first instance, to accept the affectionate thanks of the congregation, for their truly laudable exertions in the conduct of these schools, together with an assurance, that the society rejoices with them in the success of their virtuous endeavours, and would earnestly exhort them to continue their diligence in this good work.

"That the young men, who have associated for the purpose of instructing and encouragiug youth in the paths of religion and virtue, be assured that the congregation experiences a grateful pleasure in their exertions, and earnestly intreats them to persevere in their accustomed duties, without abating of that truly commendable zeal they have hitherto manifested.

"That the committee appointed for the management of the Sunday-Schools, which now contain 195 children, are also entitled to, and hereby desired to accept the thanks of the congregation for seconding the efforts of the young people, and that they be assured of the disposition of the society to afford them every necessary support." (*P.*) On the author's manner of instruction, see *supra*, p. 69, *Note.*

employed, not excepted, and that whatever men may intend, the designs of God are always just, wise, and kind.

For whatever purpose the Divine Being has been pleased to remove me from Birmingham, and to make an opening for me in this place, does not yet appear, any more than how long this new station may continue. But we must conclude it was for *good*, and I hope, my brethren, it was for good to you, and to myself also. It will, however, be the fault of both if it be not so. Let us, then, endeavour to derive from this our new relation to each other, all the advantages that it is capable of supplying; and this will be accomplished by the faithful discharge of our respective duties.

Before I proceed to explain myself any farther, I cannot avoid adverting to another circumstance in the unsearchable ways of Divine Providence; and such reflections as these tend to awe and humble us, to bend our wills to that of the great Being, *in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways*, and to prepare us for any future events which that supreme and all-comprehensive Mind may have destined for us.

On my annual visit to London, prior to the last, when my most honoured friend, and your late excellent pastor, was living, and even in better health and spirits than he had enjoyed for some years preceding, I little imagined that at my next annual visit I should preach his funeral sermon;* and at that time I as little imagined that I should be his successor in this place. Both these events, however, with every thing else that yet lies before us, and of which we are equally and happily ignorant, were then, and at all times, known to that great Being who sees the end from the beginning, and who calls things that are not, as though they were. To this will, though unknown to us, let us be ever willing to submit; firmly believing it to be the wisest and best, and holding ourselves always ready to perform the duties of any situation in which, though ever so unexpectedly, we may be placed. For every new situation has new duties. What are mine and yours at present, it is our business to attend to.

It has pleased our divine Author to make man a social being; and he has led us by this principle to distribute and class ourselves in a great variety of ways, for civil and religious purposes. This is the origin of nations, and of churches;

* See *supra*, p. 441.

and the duties of the members of these societies have respect to the particular objects and uses of them.

The Author of our religion, not being ignorant of human nature, had a view to this circumstance in the constitution of his church. For, as the apostle says, [*Ephesians*, iv. 8,] when he ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, he gave gifts unto men, and appointed in his church not only extraordinary officers, such as apostles and prophets, but likewise ordinary ones, as pastors and teachers, for the work of the saints, and for the edifying of the body of Christ. The few rules of discipline which he established, have respect to associated bodies of Christians. For he says, [*Matt.* xviii. 15—17,] that *if a brother offend, the person offended must first tell him his fault to himself alone. After this he is to take one or two with him; but if these methods fail, he is to bring the affair before the church; and if the person who is in fault will not hear the church, he is to be considered as a heathen or a publican;* that is, he is to be excluded from their societies, and the advantages of them.

Wherever the apostles preached Christianity, they established churches, with regular officers, whose duty respected those churches. Wherever there was a sufficient number of converts, they made a formal appointment of elders and deacons, to attend both to the spiritual and temporal concerns of the churches; and the members of these churches had regular meetings, at least once a week, on the Lord's day, and then the elders and deacons constantly officiated. The Scriptures were publicly read, prayers were made, psalms were sung, and the Lord's Supper administered; and it was the business of some persons to see that these things were done *decently and in order*.

For this purpose, *Timothy*, [1 *Ep.* iv. 13,] and no doubt other Christian ministers, were to give themselves wholly to these duties, and especially to improve themselves by the diligent study of the Scriptures, so as to qualify them to instruct others. That such was the constant practice of the apostles, of all the primitive Christians, and indeed of all Christians of every age to the present time, in whatever else they might differ, is undeniable. We cannot doubt, therefore, but that Christ himself, and the apostles, as well as all Christians, in every age, were fully apprized of the uses of Christian churches regularly constituted, and that the business of Christian instruction and edification could not be so well conducted without them.

But had we known nothing of the opinion or practice of our Saviour or the apostles, with respect to this subject, we must ourselves, if we had given any attention to the nature and end of Christianity, to the nature of man, and to the situation of all Christians in this state of trial, have discovered the propriety and use of Christian societies, with proper officers to preside and officiate in them: for officers are necessary in all societies.

Christianity is a system of doctrines and of duties. The doctrines, few and simple as they are, require to be taught and explained, the corruptions and abuses which have been introduced into it must be guarded against, and the duties of Christianity must be inculcated. To do this to each individual separately, is evidently impossible; and the instruction which suits one person may equally suit great numbers; and therefore it is most convenient to give them to the whole society at the same time. Besides, Christian duties are inculcated with much greater effect to societies than to single persons. If any impression is to be made upon the heart and the affections; if men are to be led to *feel*, in order to determine, and to act, the discourses will be delivered to much greater advantage to a society than to separate individuals. The teacher himself will be much more animated, and he will therefore speak to greater effect, in addressing a large audience, than in speaking to single persons; and every individual of the audience will feel the force of the exhortation much more sensibly himself, when he perceives the effect of it upon others.

It is of great importance, therefore, that Christians should form themselves into societies, and that numbers should hear instruction and exhortation at the same time. And, that prayer is highly useful, and therefore proper, upon such occasions, is evident for exactly the same reason. It seems unquestionable, that if prayer, or an address to the Supreme Being, be proper at all, it must be as proper for societies as for single persons; and one of the company may as well be the mouth of the rest in speaking on this occasion as on any other.

Here, however, I find a society of Christians so constituted. You, my brethren, and your fathers before you, have been used to assemble, and to assemble in this place, for the purpose of Christian instruction and Christian worship. You have appointed me to discharge the duties of your public instructor, and to address the Supreme Being in your name.

I have accepted of the appointment, and, by the help of God, shall discharge the duties of this honourable office; and with respect to it, I trust that I can adopt the language of the apostle in my text: *This also I wish, even your perfection.*

It will be my ambition, in humble imitation of the zeal and exemplary conduct of my predecessor, not only that you be well instructed in the doctrines of Christianity, and exhorted to the duties of it, but that you distinguish yourselves among Christian churches by your superior excellence in these respects. An emulation of this kind is far from being censurable. It is commendable in all Christian societies, in all Christian ministers, and in all Christian persons. We should *study earnestly the best gifts, and provoke unto love and to good works.* It will be my wish to have it in my power to boast of you, as I rejoice in being able to do with respect to the congregation that I served at Leeds, and still more that of Birmingham;* and I think I may venture to say, that there is not in this country a Christian society, consisting of persons, and especially those in younger life, better informed with respect to the principles of Christianity in all their extent, or more zealous and exemplary in the discharge of the duties of it. Many young persons of both sexes in that congregation are sufficiently qualified to instruct others, and indeed are already in the habit of doing it.†

What I would principally recommend for this excellent purpose, (to give such an idea of the business as a single discourse will admit,) is to divide the younger part of the congregation into two or three classes, according to their age and the degree of their knowledge, and to instruct them separately, when no other persons, strangers or parents, are present. The reason of this is pretty obvious. For no person can speak to young people as he naturally would, and as he ought to do, when others are present. This necessarily divides his attention, and leads him to speak as he would wish not those who are to be instructed, but those who are not to be instructed, to hear.

For a reason almost as obvious, I would confine this course of instruction by classes to persons under the age of thirty. When I began these lectures, which was in the place of my first settlement as a minister, I was not aware of the importance of this rule, and invited the whole congregation to attend the lectures. But the consequence was,

* See *supra*, pp. 5, 11, 20, 21, 54—57, 69. † See *supra*, pp. 461, 462, *Note*.

that the more elderly part of the congregation came in preference to the younger part, and many of these came not to learn, but to teach, or rather to cavil. I do not say, I do not believe, that there would be the same inconvenience in this place; I had nothing of this kind to apprehend at Leeds, or at Birmingham. And the leading sentiments of this congregation are too nearly the same with my own, to afford any ground for it. But still I think it best to confine these courses of instruction to the age that is naturally the most teachable, and to leave persons of riper years to acquire this kind of knowledge by books or conversation; and in general they certainly stand in less need of particular assistance.

The proper object of these lectures is to communicate, in the most familiar and effectual manner, the elements of religious knowledge; in other words, to make young persons thoroughly to understand the reasons why they are Christians, why they are Protestants, and why they are Protestant Dissenters. It is also to teach them what pure Christianity is, and what are the corruptions and abuses that have been introduced into it. And these important articles of instruction cannot be given in detail, so as to impress the mind properly, in miscellaneous discourses, which those from the pulpit always, and in a manner necessarily, are, but only in a regular system, in which the easiest principles are explained in the first place, and articles of greater difficulty in their proper connexion afterwards.

Give me leave in this place to observe, that, in order to carry this plan of instruction into effect, and for other important purposes of a Christian society, the minister should have the aid of persons of authority and influence in the congregation, who may do many things with propriety and effect which may be very necessary to be done, but yet can least of all be expected from a person in the situation of a minister, and especially a Dissenting minister. At Birmingham, about twelve members were chosen annually by ballot, as elders, to assist the ministers in superintending the affairs of the congregation. With respect to this plan of lectures, some of these persons annually took an account of all the young persons who were of a proper age to be admitted into the classes, and in return I gave to them an annual account of those who had attended; that if any admonition was proper to be given on the subject, it might be by *them*; the province of

the minister being confined to the instruction of those who attended him. My advice to these elders, and to the congregation at large, was, that those who were properly *children*, and of a suitable age to be admitted into the two first classes, should be obliged, by the authority of their parents, to attend them; but that those who were arrived to the age that was proper for the highest class, viz. from sixteen or eighteen to thirty, should be allowed to judge and act for themselves, their parents interposing their advice only.

I reserve the mention of other particulars of a general plan for the edification of Christian societies, to another opportunity; contenting myself for the present with the mention of only one particular more, which is, that in reading the Scriptures I made it a rule to myself to give an exposition of what I read; and this I have reason to think was generally considered to be the most instructive and useful part of my public services. This exposition is the more useful, as it gives the minister an opportunity of mentioning a variety of topics, and especially those of a critical and historical kind, which it is of considerable importance that Christians should be acquainted with, and yet are of such a nature, that they might never find a proper place in a sermon. Presuming that you cannot disapprove of this part of my plan, I shall the next Lord's-day begin to read and expound the gospel history in the order of a harmony; and then, God willing, go through the whole of the *New Testament* in order;* and, if it should be acceptable, I may occasionally give this exposition in the place of a sermon.

Having now mentioned what appears to me to be necessary on the present occasion, of what I had to suggest for the edification of this Christian society, I shall just speak to a few objections that may be made to the introduction of them.

It may be said, that the instruction of the younger part of the congregation by classes must have been found impracticable, at least in the metropolis, or it would certainly have been adopted and continued. But I cannot easily persuade myself that what has been found very practicable, and highly useful, in large country towns, should not be so in this or any other place. It is certainly as much *wanted* in or near London as in any place whatever. There young persons are most of all in the way of seduction, both with

* These Expositions are now contained in Vols. XIII. XIV.

respect to principles and practice; and therefore the guard against this seduction in this place ought to be peculiarly strong.

Young men in particular are much more likely to meet with unbelievers in the metropolis, than in any other part of the kingdom. They ought, therefore, to be better grounded in the evidences of Christianity; that, as the apostle says, they may always be able to *give a reason of the hope that is in them.* Here also they are more likely to meet with persons of religious persuasions different from their own, and therefore they ought to be well versed in every thing relating to the theory of religion, and the history of it, or the whole compass of religious controversy, in order that to the arguments of others they may be able to oppose their own. And since you would not wish that things of this kind should be frequently brought into the pulpit, (though there may be the greatest propriety in doing this occasionally,) there should be some other proper opportunity of giving this kind of information.

What is the reason why so many young persons of the present age become unbelievers, or why do others of them desert the Dissenting interest? It can only be because they were not at a proper age taught to understand, and to value their principles, as Christians or Dissenters; and therefore the means that have hitherto been employed to attain this desirable end have not been sufficient. Consequently there is a call upon us to attempt something that has not yet been done.

Besides, why should that which is actually practised in other places, great cities not excepted, be deemed impracticable here? In all churches of foreign Protestants, the separate instruction of children and young persons out of the pulpit, is considered to be as much the stated duty of the minister as any thing that he does, in it. With them there is no example of any persons whatever, rich or poor, growing up to years of maturity without going through a regular course of catechising, after which they of course become communicants. This, therefore, is necessarily at a very early age, never later than about fourteen; so that the superstitious dread of this ordinance, which has taken such firm hold on the minds of Christians in this country, and especially the Dissenters, is with them effectually precluded and unknown. And it may be presumed that, when a person is in the habit of frequently declaring himself a Christian, in the least equivocal manner, he will be more attentive to

the principles and the duties of his profession. It was observed as an extraordinary sight in this country, that when several thousands of *Hanoverian* and *Hessian* troops, who were *Lutherans*, were brought over hither in the last rebellion, [1745,] they all, as I have been informed, received the Lord's Supper in their ranks.* With us, both this Christian ordinance, and the instruction of youth preparatory to it, are equally and shamefully neglected.

It will be said by some, that no proper time can be found for these exercises; that on the Lord's-day the minister is too much occupied with other duty, and on the week days, those who should be his pupils; so that they can never conveniently meet. But when any object is deemed of sufficient value, the means of gaining it will be found. When I was at Strasbourg, which was in the month of September, 1774, going out of curiosity into a large Lutheran church, at six o'clock in the morning, I found three ministers instructing three classes at that early hour, in different parts of the church, so as to be out of each other's hearing, and one of these classes consisted of grown up young women. Going thence into another of their churches, I found two of the ministers so employed.† This was after I had been in the habit of giving similar lectures at Leeds. There, however, as well as at Birmingham, I found, by trial, that the most convenient time for these lectures was on the Lord's-day. Having undertaken the office of pastor in this congregation, I am willing to submit to any personal inconvenience rather than that which I conceive to be the most important part of the ministerial duty should not be discharged. You will please to consider my proposal, and I shall cheerfully follow your directions with respect to the mode of carrying the scheme into execution.

If you ask, how it has come to pass that this duty, so important and useful as I conceive it to be, should have been so much neglected by those who are usually called *rational Dissenting ministers*, (for it is not wholly neglected by others,)

* These *Christian* soldiers, hired, or rather compelled to risque their lives in a *foreign* quarrel, of which probably very few of them understood the merits, appear to have received the Communion as a *viaticum*, on their march to the *field of blood*. Thus when *Frobisher*, in 1577, was setting sail, to search, and if necessary, to fight, for *gold ore*, the adventurous captain remarks of himself and his crew, "We all received the Communion aboard the *Aid*, from the Minister of Gravesend, and prepared ourselves as good Christians, and resolute men, for all fortunes." Harris's *Voyages*, I. p. 575. Dr. Holmes, of Cambridge, N.E., quoting this passage, justly adds, "with the professed object of the voyage in our view, we are struck with the style of the voyager." *American Annals*, 1808, I. p. 89. *Note* 4.

† See *supra*, p. 51.

the answer is pretty obvious. Till of late years only one system, and one book of religious instruction, was received among Dissenters; and this was *the Assembly's Catechism:* and those ministers who began to inquire and think for themselves, beginning to dislike the principles of that catechism, while the people remained attached to them, had no means of freeing themselves from the embarrassment of this situation, but by neglecting this part of their duty altogether.* At this day, ministers are happily more at liberty to choose their own modes of instruction; and, in this favourable situation, I trust they will soon generally revert to the laudable customs of our ancestors at home, and that of Protestants abroad.

Some may object to these lectures, and this exposition of the Scriptures, as *innovations*, what they have not been used to. But I trust I am speaking to persons who will not object to any innovation that promises to be an improvement. Besides, the things that I now recommend, and wish to introduce, are, in fact, no innovations; being only the revival of ancient customs, such as I well remember to have been practised in the place which I attended while I was young; where the minister both catechised, and likewise expounded the Scriptures whenever he read them. This, indeed, is the only method of making intelligent Christians, and bringing persons well acquainted with the Scriptures, which are the source of all religious knowledge.†

It may be said, that the business of catechising falls within the proper department of the parent. No doubt it does, and so does the instruction of his servants, and every other moral duty whatever. But in all this he finds his account in public instruction, both with respect to himself and every branch of his family; and the business of catechising will be carried to much more advantage, when both the parent and the minister take their part in it. Besides, at this day there are but too many parents who, having been neglected with respect to this article of instruction themselves, give but little attention to it in their own families; and in this case it is

* See *supra*, pp. 50, 51.

† See *supra*, p. 6; Vol. I. *Memoir*, 19, 157. Those who adopt Dr. Priestley's opinion, which his own practice, after he had "introduced the custom" at Birmingham, uniformly justified, must regret that a contrary practice is so frequent in Christian assemblies; where detached portions of the Bible are read by the minister without the accompaniment of any exposition. This subject appears peculiarly to deserve the very serious consideration of *Unitarians*, who expect the general abandonment of popular errors, only from an increasing attention, among the people, to the phraseology and connexion of the Scriptures.

certainly better that some provision be made for doing it by the minister, than that it should be neglected altogether.

So far am I from wishing to supersede the instruction of the parent by these catechetical lectures, that this additional help will be in a manner necessary, and always useful, to the children, in assisting them to perform the little tasks that may be occassionally given them; and the attention to this business, on the part of the parent, or some of the elder branches of the family, will be found to be of great use to themselves, by leading them to look back to those things which they had formerly, and perhaps but imperfectly, learned. This is a very considerable advantage, which cannot fail to accrue, in an indirect manner, from the plan of instruction that I have proposed. But I cannot in this place explain the particulars.

Lastly, some that are disposed to cavil may say, I take this opportunity of communicating my own peculiar principles; and no doubt I shall do it, as far as I find my pupils capable of understanding them. Whatever I think to be true and important myself, I shall always think it my duty to impart to others. But I shall never fail to lay greater stress upon Christianity itself, in any form, than upon my own peculiar ideas concerning it; and the great duties of the Christian life, which are of infinitely more importance than any speculative opinions, are the same on all our schemes.

As an article of *theory*, I certainly lay considerable stress on certain opinions concerning God, and his moral government, concerning the person of Christ, and some particular doctrines of revelation. I consider God as one being, and one person, and Christ as a *prophet, mighty in word and in deed*, or a man inspired of God, who taught the will of God, whom God raised from the dead, and who will come again to raise all the dead, and judge the world. I also believe there is no other judgment, or future state, prior to this, which is emphatically called *the great day;* and I shall take every opportunity of insisting upon these important doctrines. But the article with respect to which all Christians agree, and ever have agreed, is of infinitely more moment than all the rest, viz. that there is a life after this, and that in this future life all men will receive according to their character and actions here. This is the one great truth of revelation. It is what man could never have discovered by the light of nature; and it was in order to give the highest degree of credibility to this one truth, viz. the doctrine of a resur-

rection from the dead, that the divine missions of Christ and of the apostles were provided. Life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel. To remind you of this greatest of all truths, and of the moral duties which a regard to this truth tends to enforce, is the great business of every Christian minister. Every thing else that he teaches, or does, is subservient to this. For this reason, our great object is to inculcate that deep reverence for God, that pure benevolence to man, and that command of our private appetites and passions, which give a dignity to the human character, and constitute our only preparation for that future state, which the gospel holds out to us.

Since every person who ever called himself a Christian, holds this great article of Christian faith, I receive him as a brother, in whatever light he may consider me; believing that if we equally cultivate the spirit, and equally attend to the duties of Christianity, our common Saviour, and that God, whose servant our Saviour was, will regard us with equal favour.

I call myself an *Unitarian*, hitherto more usually called a *Socinian;* but I do not believe I shall have any advantage hereafter over the *Arain*, or the *Trinitarian*, who shall equally feel and act as becomes a Christian. Members of the Church of England, and also of that of Rome, holding, as I do, the great doctrine above-mentioned, as taught by Christ, I consider as brother Christians, though they may not acknowledge me in that light. I protest against the corruptions and abuses which I believe those churches have introduced into Christianity, and are supporting in it; conceiving that the belief, and, in some degree, even the moral influence of Christianity is obstructed by that means. But if they be sincere in their belief, I have no prejudice against their persons. I am willing to believe that they honestly follow the light that God has given them, which is all I can pretend to do; and if I imagine that I *know* more than they, I certainly ought to *do* more, distinguishing myself by my zeal in the cause of the gospel, in proportion as I conceive that I hold it in greater purity.

There are more particulars relating to the good estate of Christian societies, that I shall some time or other take the liberty of laying before you; but I wish that, in the first place, you would well consider what I have recommended at present, as being of much more importance than any of the rest. All that your ministers can do is to advise. You are to judge, and also to assist in the execution.

Let us, then, my Christian brethren, while the connexion that is now begun, and which, like every thing else here below, is of uncertain duration, shall continue, give mutual assistance to each other. We have, I trust, but one common object, as we have certainly but one common interest; and we are all accountable to that great Being, who fixes the bounds of our habitation, and whose providence orders all events, for the faithful discharge of our proper duty, in every relation of life. It will be my part, having given more attention to the various articles of Christian knowledge than you can have had an opportunity of doing, to impart to you whatever I deem to be useful and important. It is yours to attend, and to judge with candour, to embrace the truth whenever you perceive its evidence, and to exercise forbearance towards myself, as well as towards all other Christians, whenever you see reason to withhold your assent.

But our greatest duties relate not to speculation, but to practice. We are all to be *hearers* of the word; but the great article of all is, to be *doers* of the work assigned us by God to do. When our Lord shall return, and take an account of his servants, the inquiry that he will make will not be what we thought concerning his person, or any other subject of speculation, but whether we shall have obeyed his commands, and especially whether we shall have fulfilled the great duty of Christian love, which includes that of candour and forbearance towards our erring brethren.

Your late excellent pastor and myself held several opinions very materially different from each other; yet, I think I may flatter myself so far as to say, that few men ever entertained a more sincere esteem for each other; because we had alike the strongest sense of the insignificance of the greatest articles of speculation compared to the smallest articles of Christian practice. All that we, my brethren, can wish, is to follow his steps, in order to have a happy meeting with him, and such as he was, hereafter; and I have hardly an idea of a state of greater happiness for lovers of truth, and lovers of virtue, of our race, than frequent intercourse with such persons as he was, whose character I had an opportunity of enlarging upon the last time that I spake from this place. As the vicious never fail to corrupt one another by their society, so the virtuous continually improve each other; and we must not forget that the most perfect of our race are still imperfect characters, though capable of infinite improvement; and that the farther we are advanced towards perfection on

this side the grave, the greater advantage we shall set out with, in that which commences beyond it.

To this great end let us, my brethren, bend all our endeavours. The whole of this life is but a temporary and probationary state, the proper business of which is our preparation for a future and permanent one; and Christian societies, with a provision for public instruction, are only one means of assisting us in this preparation, by providing that men be admonished of their duty, and taught how to derive the proper advantage from every incident in life, respecting ourselves or others. When this great end shall be accomplished; when, by this and every other proper means, we shall be *built up in the holy faith whereof we make profession*, and especially when we shall have *edified one another in love*, then will the faithful pastor, and the well-instructed and improved hearers, be prepared to meet the great Shepherd of the whole flock, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

The Duty of Forgiveness of Injuries:

A

DISCOURSE

INTENDED TO BE DELIVERED SOON AFTER

THE RIOTS IN BIRMINGHAM.

[Birmingham, 1791.]

PREFACE.

It is necessary to inform the reader, that the following Discourse was composed in order to be delivered by myself, presently after the riots in Birmingham, having at that time no idea of there being any difficulty in my re-establishment in that place. I supposed that the violence of a mob being transient, the friends of the Establishment who had any influence in the place, would be ashamed and mortified at such proceedings in favour of a church of which they were members; and, consequently, that effectual care would not

fail to be taken to prevent any such outrage in future, and even to remove the most distant apprehension of it. In this flattering idea, however, I found myself so much mistaken, that I was under the disagreeable necessity of entirely abandoning a favourite situation; and even when I had determined to settle where I now am, and only proposed to return and preach to my former congregation till Christmas, it was thought to be too hazardous; my best friends not being able to ensure my personal safety.

In consequence of this, my worthy colleague Mr. Blythe,* requested that I would send him the Discourse which I had composed, intending to deliver it in my name. With this I readily complied. But his years rendering him less able to deliver so long a sermon, to so large an audience as was expected to be present, Mr. Coates† was so obliging as to deliver it for him; and at the request of the hearers, who consisted of the congregations of both the *Old* and *New Meeting*, it is now printed.

I forbear in this place to make any reflections on the event which gave occasion to this Discourse, as I reserve them for the *Appeal*, which I shall shortly make to the public on the subject.‡ I only now repeat my earnest wish that every improper feeling, unworthy of men, and especially of Christians, may be repressed by all the sufferers, and the Dissenters in general. Let us shew that we deserve the best treatment from our countrymen, by our not resenting the worst. It is not necessary, however, in order to a proper Christian temper and behaviour on such occasions, to conceive or to speak of the conduct of our adversaries otherwise than as it really was. We should, no doubt, make every reasonable allowance for them. This, common candour requires. But there is such a thing as injustice and villany in the world, and the benevolence of a Christian cannot require that we should entirely turn our eyes from it, and deny its existence; though no malevolence of others should extinguish our benevolence to them. We must not be overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. From a sense of the wickedness of others, and the dangerous tendency of it, we should exert ourselves to correct it, and be ready to overlook all the past, whenever their better disposition gives us a good prospect for the future.

* See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 155—157; *supra*, pp. 31, 39, *Note*.

† Then minister of the congregation at the Old Meeting. See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 155.

‡ See "Appeal to the Public, on the subject of the Riots in Birmingham," 2 Parts, 1792.

I shall, therefore, upon all occasions speak of the conduct of my adversaries as it shall appear to me to deserve, and of my own sufferings as I really feel them, without disguising any thing. I pretend not to perfection, though I hope I have never felt much otherwise than I have recommended to others in this Discourse; and I hope that this, as well as every other dispensation of Divine Providence, will contribute to improve me still more. If this be the case, it will appear by the increasing satisfaction I shall feel in my own mind, and by greater zeal to discharge the proper duty of my station; making the most of that short and uncertain portion of time that may be allotted to me. Let those who are disposed to scrutinize my conduct, watch me as narrowly as they please. I wish that both they and myself had a more constant regard to the eye of that great Being who sees us all, and who will one day render unto us according as our works shall be.

London, December 12, 1791.

DISCOURSE.

LUKE xxiii. 34:

Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.

SUCH, my Christian brethren, were the sentiments and the language of our Saviour, in a period of extreme agony, probably during the very act of crucifixion, as they seem to relate to his *executioners*, who only obeyed the orders of their commanding officer, as he did those of *Pilate*, the governor of the country, without any reflection on what they did. In some sense, however, this language may have respected even the primary authors and abettors of all the violent proceedings against him; since it was *ignorance* that was the true cause of all *their* prejudice and rancour. These, however, could not be forgiven without repentance; and therefore, in this case, it must imply that God would open their eyes to see the mistake they had fallen into, and the fatal consequences of those strong prejudices and violent passions to which they had given way.

In both these cases let us imitate him after whom we are called. We have suffered all that brutal rage and malice

could inflict, our persons only excepted; and with respect to some of us, even this extreme of outrage, it is but too probable, would not have been spared, if it had not been for the protecting hand of that great Being who restrains the wrath of men, and who, in his due time, *stilleth alike the waves of the sea and the tumults of the people.* But, notwithstanding this, our sentiments of forgiveness, at least of good-will, should, as in our Saviour's case, respect both these classes of men, those by whose hands our property has been destroyed, and our lives endangered, and those by whom they were instigated to do it.

The immediate actors in the late horrid scenes were probably too ignorant, and too indifferent to every thing that deserves to be called *religion*, to reflect at all on what they did. If they had any thing in view besides mere plunder, it was pleasing their superiors, and obeying the orders they had received, as in the course of their outrages they more than once declared. They therefore resemble the mere executioners at our Saviour's crucifixion. But their instigators, whoever they were, are in the case of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, by whose malice and wicked devices his sufferings were brought about. With respect, however, to both these classes of men, we may well say *they knew not what they did*, as I shall evince in the following observations on their conduct. After this, I shall advance some reasons for the forgiveness of injuries, and then shew what we may learn from, and how we ought to feel in our circumstances.

I. The authors of the late outrages must have been utterly ignorant of the nature of religion, or they would never have formed the idea of promoting it by force; because they are two things that have no relation to each other. Religion consists of certain opinions concerning God, concerning our duty here, and concerning our expectations hereafter; and of sentiments of mind, and a course of conduct, corresponding to those opinions. It is therefore seated in the minds of men, to which nothing but reason and argument can have access, and on which it is impossible that external force can operate. Nay, this is well known to have a direct contrary tendency, as it will be concluded by every body, that recourse would never have been had to violence, in order to change men's opinions, and their conduct depending upon their opinions, but where there was a consciousness of a deficiency of reason and solid argument. Such methods imply a tacit condemnation of men's own principles, and almost amount to an acknowledgment, that

the doctrines they wish to support are not what they themselves really believe, but such as it is their interest to be supported. Such conduct naturally leads indifferent spectators to suspect the truth of principles which the abettors of them endeavour to support in this improper manner, at the same time that it serves to draw their attention to the principles of those who suffer the violence, and disposes them to listen with candour to the arguments in favour of them, which is giving them all the advantages that their advocates can wish for. Now this could never have been the real intention of those who had recourse to violence, because they could not mean to prejudice their own cause, and promote that of their adversaries. *They*, therefore, *knew not what they did*, and this is a call upon us to endeavour to inform them better, which we should do both for their sakes and our own.

II. The promoters of violence in matters of religion are equally ignorant of *human nature* and of *history*, which would have taught them that men never have been, and never can be, wrought upon by such means. The minds of men have always revolted at every idea of *force*. And it having been almost always taken for granted, that a cause supported by these means is a bad one, persecution has hardly ever failed to increase the persecuted party. This was so evidently the case with respect to Christianity, that it became a kind of proverb, that *the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church*. The Heathens having nothing to allege in favour of the ancient superstitions, but that they were ancient, and that the prosperity of countries was supposed to depend upon the observance of them, endeavoured for the space of three hundred years to extirpate Christianity by penal laws, and the rigorous execution of them. Accordingly, they confiscated, they banished, they tortured, and they put to death in all the horrid forms that the ingenuity of men, unrestrained by pity, could invent. But this did not diminish the number of Christians. On the contrary, these measures exciting more attention to the new doctrine than any thing else could have done, and the evidence of its truth, when examined by impartial persons, appearing satisfactory, more converts were continually made, till the whole Roman empire, and the emperors themselves, became Christian.

The same has been the consequence of numerous persecutions of Christians by Christians, or rather of real Christians by nominal ones. For the spirit, at least, of Christianity

must have been wanting, whenever recourse has been had to violence, in order to silence and extirpate any sect. I shall only mention the reformation from Popery, and the case of the Dissenters in this country. More men were destroyed in the persecution of the Protestants by Catholics, than of Christians by Heathens. The *Waldenses* and *Albigenses* were massacred by thousands and tens of thousands, in the northern parts of *Italy*, and southern parts of *France*.* But there they still exist, and in as great numbers as ever, to this day. The persecution of *Zuinglius*, of *Luther*, of *Calvin*, and of their followers, established the Protestant religion in a great part of *Germany*, *Switzerland*, and *France*. The cruelties of Philip II. made a Protestant state of *Holland*, and drove from the *Netherlands* the woollen manufactory, which we gained by the asylum which we afforded to those who left that country on account of religion. The persecution of the *French Protestants* by Lewis XIV. did not diminish the number of Protestants in France, and brought over to us their manufacturers in silk, and numbers of other most ingenious and industrious artists.

The persecution of the *Puritans*, or our original Dissenters, by Queen Elizabeth and the *Stewarts*, much more than doubled the number of Dissenters in this country, besides driving thousands of them into foreign parts, and especially into *North America*,† where they increased, and established themselves in an extraordinary manner; and where, in consequence of the farther oppression of this country, they are now become a great and independent nation.‡ The Dissenters in this country were decreasing in number since the accession of the present royal family, which favoured them, and inspired the bishops with a spirit of moderation. But since the court, or at least the bishops, and the clergy in general, are become more hostile to them, they are increasing again; as the state of this, and every other great manufacturing town is a proof. These facts are undeniable; and since this course of things has been uniform and invariable, in all times and in all countries, the cause must be permanent, and exist in the very principles of human nature; so that it may be depended upon to produce the same effect in all similar circumstances. But the authors of the late violences must have been ignorant of all this, or, which comes to the same thing, they must never have reflected

* See Vol. X. pp. 284—286, 335—342.
† See Ibid. pp. 401, 404—407. ‡ See Vol. IX. pp. 3—5; Vol. X. p. 523.

upon it, when they thought of extirpating the Dissenters of this town by burning their places of public worship, and destroying their houses and property. They would not else have taken this sure means of exciting attention to us, of rendering themselves and their cause odious in the eyes of all men of sense and reflection, and, consequently, of increasing our numbers, and diminishing their own. They must even have been ignorant that our places of public worship, as well as our private property, are under the protection of the law, or they would never have acted so absurdly as to destroy what they themselves must contribute to make good. Certainly, then, we may say of them, as of the Jews in our Saviour's time, that *they knew not what they did.*

III. The peculiar virulence of some of the church people against the Dissenters, had its origin from our application to Parliament for the repeal of the *Test Laws.* But in this case the laity caught the ignorant alarms of the clergy, who persuaded them that the Church would be endangered by that repeal; when the history of all other countries shews that it would have been strengthened by the measure.

What is an *established church*, but a church the members of which are maintained by the State? And would not this have continued to be the case with the *Church of England*, though Dissenters had been admitted into civil offices, at the appointment of the crown? This was always the case in *Catholic* countries, which, nevertheless, continued Catholic; and it is so in every *Protestant* country except this of ours; and yet, on this account, the bishops have been sounding the alarm from one end of the kingdom to the other, and it has been echoed from many of their pulpits, that the Church is in imminent danger. Whereas, its real danger arises from this very outcry, and from the absurd measures its friends are taking to prevent that danger; inflaming a party spirit, and exhibiting us in the most odious light, as equally enemies to religion and to all good government, which only shews their utter ignorance of our principles, both with respect to religion and government. Indeed, this can hardly be called *ignorance;* for no person can well be ignorant that the Dissenters were the best friends of the present reigning family, while the loyalty of the clergy was more than dubious. Were the Dissenters in any of the late reigns republicans; and what can have made them so now?

Here, then, is another instance of great ignorance. Had the *Test Laws* been repealed, the Church would have been

supported by its proper revenues, its forms, and its subscriptions, and the country would not, in reality, have perceived any difference; while the Dissenters would, in great numbers, have sunk into the Church. Whereas, now a mark is, as it were, set upon us, as persons *not trustworthy*, not entitled to confidence, and, therefore, hardly deserving the protection of government; and the consequence of this state of dissension in a country will certainly be such as none of its friends can wish. And if, when the evil day approaches, the pretended friends of the Church will be found to be, what they unquestionably are, the real authors of it, the general indignation of the country will turn against them. The true cause, therefore, of their present conduct is properly *ignorance;* ignorance both of the true interests of their country, and of their own.

IV. The greatest part of the late violences were directed against the *Presbyterians*, or *Unitarian* Dissenters, and not against the *Independents*, or *Methodists*. But this was owing to our adversaries' ignorance of the principles of *Unitarians;* and it should be our care, as it is evidently our interest, to inform them better. The infatuated populace, none of whom had probably ever read any thing on the subject, must have been taught by their superiors to consider *Unitarians* as peculiarly hostile to the government, to the *state*, and to the *king*, as well as to the *church*. But, though it be true, that our principles are farther removed from those of the Establishment than those of the *Independents*, or *Methodists*, those principles are purely religious, and have no tendency whatever to make us bad subjects of any government under the sun, and, least of all, have they any tendency to immorality, which it is the great object of all religions to prevent or repress.

The great article for which we contend, is the strict *Unity of God*, from which we are denominated *Unitarians*, in opposition to the *Trinitarians*, who acknowledge *Three Divine Persons*, which we say is setting up *three gods*, equally contrary to the plainest reason, and the most express doctrine of the Scriptures, which teach us that there is but "one God and Father of all," and "one Lord Jesus Christ," called the "mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."* This doctrine, surely, is equally rational, scriptural, and innocent; so that nothing but

* *Ephes.* iv. 6; 1 *Cor.* viii. 6; 1 *Tim.* ii. 5. See Vol. XIV. pp. 80, 126, 127, 276.

extreme ignorance could have led any man to imagine the contrary.

Is not the one God whom we worship, capable, in our idea, of punishing vice and rewarding virtue; and do we not firmly believe that he will do it, if not in this world, yet surely in another? Does not our religion, then, contain as effectual provision for good conduct in life as any religion whatever? Will it make any man behave better in society, to believe that there are three divine persons; that one of these became incarnate, and died, to satisfy the justice of another of them, and that the third of these divine persons, by a supernatural influence on the mind, applies the merits of this incarnation and satisfaction to every individual Christian? Is it possible that such notions as these can either enlighten the mind, mend the heart, or better the conduct of any man? But, without enlarging on the strange uncouthness, and manifest confusion of ideas, in the creed of our adversaries, it must argue extreme ignorance in any person to take offence at ours, as if it had any tendency to make us worse subjects than other citizens, and, therefore, that it is more proper that our places of worship and houses should be burned, our property destroyed, and our lives endangered, than those of any other denomination of Dissenters.

Our adversaries believe that Christ himself is God. But while we believe that he had commissions from God, that God spake by him, and performed all the miracles by which his divine mission was proved, we pay the same regard to what he taught, and equally believe what he promised or threatened in the name of God; and this is the proper, and, indeed, the only end of Christian faith. Do our adversaries believe more firmly than we do that, whether Christ be God or man, he will come again to raise the dead and judge the world, and give to every man according to his works? Surely, then, though our faith be not the same with theirs, it must (besides having the advantage of being more rational, intelligible, and, consequently, more defensible) have as strong a tendency to produce good works. Why, then, should they take any umbrage at it? We are all aiming at the same thing, though by different means.

But they say, that by preaching our doctrines, we bring men off from the Church, and thereby endanger it. But, surely, the object of sensible men is not the support of any church or system, as such, independent of its truth or

utility; and if error and inconvenience, in church or state, can be removed, will not the country be gainers by such reformation? If it be apparent that our doctrines do no harm to *us*, why should it be supposed that they would do harm to *others;* and how would the country be injured by their general prevalence? Should the nation be converted to our opinions, and the Church be reformed in consequence of it, the change would be a perfectly voluntary one, and men would think just as well of the new church, as they now do of the old. Surely, then, had these things been properly understood, the places in which we teach our innocent doctrines would not have been burned, nor would the houses in which we live have been destroyed, or our lives attempted. Let us, then, pity our adversaries, for their deplorable ignorance, and endeavour to instruct them better.

As to the *motives for the forgiveness of injuries*, which is the second head of this Discourse, what should operate more powerfully upon Christians than the example of Christ, from whom we are denominated? And very ill shall we be entitled to the name of *Christians*, if we do not adopt the sentiments, follow the example, and obey the precepts of Christ. What are the injuries that we have received, great as they have been, compared to *his*, to say nothing of the difference of our characters and deserts, his superiority with respect to which ought not only to have exempted him from injuries, but ensured to him the gratitude and best offices of his countrymen and the world. Instead of this, as soon as ever he made himself conspicuous, though it was by the most exemplary virtue, and universal beneficence, he began to be envied, hated, and ill-treated, by the priests and leading men of his nation; (the *church*, as we may say, and the *state;)* and this malignity against him increased in proportion as he distinguished himself, till they carried into execution their diabolical purpose of putting him to a cruel and ignominious death.

Notwithstanding this, in the very moment of his greatest agony, he could pray, in the words of my text, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* What dignity, my brethren, what greatness of mind, what self-command, what benevolence, and what piety, were here! All that we can feel or do, will fall far short of this. But, nevertheless, let us strive to come as near to it as we can; for this is to approach the Divine character and conduct, which he imitated, and taught his followers to imitate, when he

exhorted them to be *merciful, as our Father who is in heaven is merciful, and perfect, as he is perfect.**

II. There is real dignity and greatness of mind in the forgiveness of injuries, in which respect this disposition is infinitely superior to a spirit of revenge; for this plain reason, that revenge consists in nothing but the indulgence of the first suggestions of passion, so that under its influence men act exactly like children, or brutes. Whereas, meekness, patience, and a disposition to forgive injuries, supposes the exercise of reason and reflection. It implies a command of temper, recollection of mind, and a power to resist the impulse of passion, so as to consider the influences under which our enemies act, and to make every reasonable allowance for them. And, surely, it must be noble and excellent to recede from the state of brutes, or of children, and to make farther advances into the higher regions of intellect. It is to behave as those who are conscious that they are men, towards those whom they see to act like children, or brutes, and, therefore, to be more properly objects of pity than resentment. Let us, then, thus distinguish ourselves, by acting as becomes reasonable creatures, towards those who are destitute of reason, and thus approach to the resemblance of Christ and of God.

III. This loving our enemies, and a readiness to forgive them, is as *reasonable* as it is magnanimous, if the great end and object of all virtue be the good of all mankind, because it has an evident tendency to promote this end. Our enemies are part of the human race, as well as ourselves. They are our brethren, though our offending brethren; and it is for the good of the whole family that they be brought to a proper sense of their duty, and become virtuous and happy, as well as ourselves. And, surely, this forbearing, forgiving, and benevolent conduct, has an evident tendency to make them so; and a spirit of revenge has as evident a tendency to drive them farther from it, to make them more obstinate and injurious, to the augmentation of general misery.

The administration of justice implies nothing of revenge or ill-will. It is as much a branch or modification of benevolence, as mercy itself, being the introduction of only that measure of evil which the public good requires. It ought, therefore, to be administered with the same benevolent spirit, like the correction of an affectionate parent; and,

* *Matt.* v. 48; *Luke* vi. 36. See Vol. XIII. p. 80.

therefore, a less degree of severity or punishment, if it will suffice for public example, and the prevention of future crimes, is, in all cases, preferable to a greater.

IV. Let us farther consider that, since our adversaries are *men*, as well as ourselves, of the same original constitutions, and, consequently, liable to be affected in the same manner by the same circumstances, with the same advantages with which we have been favoured, they would have thought, have felt, and have acted as we do; and that, had Divine Providence so ordered it, by reversing our respective situations, we had been the unhappy *persecutors*, and they the *persecuted*. Let us bless God, who has made this great difference between us, and be thereby disposed to pity and to forgive.

At the same time, therefore, that we rejoice in our happier lot, let us love, pity, and pray for all our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers; that, when the great and benevolent purposes of Divine Providence shall have been answered by their present measures, those measures may cease, and their characters be changed. Though we are in a state of hostility now, we may then rejoice together; retaining no more animosity against them than the child, improved by correction, against the rod to which he owes his improvement. We, my brethren, I trust, are sincerely disposed to bless both it and the hand which has employed it.

V. Our duty, my brethren, is much easier than that of our enemies. For us, who have nothing to blame ourselves for, to forgive those who have injured us, is comparatively easy; but for them to repent of what they have done, and to behave with the same generosity and kindness towards us, with which we are ready to behave towards them, must be difficult indeed, and, therefore, it is what is rarely found. The *injured* are frequently placable, but the *injurers* are very seldom so; for nothing is more difficult than for a man to confess a fault, even when he is sensible that he has done wrong. It is *humiliating;* and, though in itself it be right, and even honourable, it is too generally thought to be degrading. Men, therefore, who have begun to be injurious, generally continue to be so; and as they are unwilling to acknowledge they have done wrong, they act as if they wished to shew the world that they had done right, and had good reason for persisting in it. Let us, then, think ourselves happy, that the part we have to act is so much more easy than that of our adversaries, and let us make

theirs easier to them, by doing ours. For when they see we bear them no malice, but, on the contrary, the greatest good-will, that we are even more concerned (as we have just reason to be) for them than ourselves, it will tend to make them relent, and repent of the injuries they have done us.

VI. *Lastly.* Thus to forgive, is for our own advantage, as it will tend to insure our future peace and tranquillity. If our meekness and forgiveness of injuries lead our adversaries to be sorry for what they have done to us, and engage their good-will, we shall have nothing more to fear from them; and were the habits of friendship and kind offices, begun on our side, to become universal, this world would be a kind of paradise; for nothing is wanting to make it so, for such beings as we are, but the good dispositions and good behaviour of those who inhabit it. We should then have nothing to guard against besides the inclemencies of the weather, and other natural evils, which our ingenuity and industry would easily enable us to conquer. But since this is not likely to be the case, let us, however, be careful to act our own parts well, and so to improve by the discipline of life, that, if we cannot make *this* world a paradise, we may secure a place in a certain paradise hereafter.

Having now shewn the ignorance of our adversaries, as a motive for a disposition to forgive them, and other reasons why we should habitually encourage this disposition, I proceed to shew what we may learn from the late awful scenes to which we have been witness, and by which we are sufferers. For, as there is a good Providence superintending all events, and there is the hand of God, as well as that of man, in every thing that befals us, we may be assured that, whatever have been the designs of men, those of God are ever just and kind, and that he will bring good out of all evil. What, then, may we learn, and what are we led to do, from our present circumstances?

I. What we have suffered has no tendency to change our opinions, or abate our zeal for them. The circumstances we are in, call alike for patience and for firmness, and by no means for relaxation with respect to our religious principles. As gold is tried by the fire, so are our principles, and our integrity in maintaining them, by such scenes as these. They are our enemies who have most reason to be ashamed of their principles, as they have produced such bad fruits, and have led to such unworthy means of supporting them. We have never thought of having recourse to any thing but reason and argument, and their recourse to violence is a

proof of the strength of our arguments, and that they have nothing of a similar nature to oppose to them. We have, therefore, the greatest cause for triumph, and by no means for despondence; and let us ever bear in mind, that violence is temporary, but truth eternal.

II. We see in the late Riots the importance of truth, and the dreadful effects of bigotry, or ill-directed zeal. When the principles of the most innocent sect are misunderstood, so that they are conceived to be dangerous to the State, thousands will not scruple to use any means, however improper, in order to effect their extirpation. In this case the leaders in the outrage must have had recourse to the most gross falsehoods, in order to excite popular resentment; and the populace, thus excited, spared no pains to effect this purpose. Nothing was then considered but in what manner to injure and mortify us; and could they, in their blind rage, have destroyed all our property, and have obliged us to abandon the country, they would, no doubt, have done it, and have thought themselves merciful in permitting us to escape with life. This they would not even have thought to have been *persecution*, because they would say the cause in which we suffer is a bad one, and not that of truth.

That the instigators of this blind fury did not scruple to have recourse to the most deliberate falsehoods, is evident from the circumstances of the case; since there was no pretence whatever, no colour, for their assertions; nothing that could be misconceived, or mis-stated, in those actions of ours for which they have so grossly aspersed us. And what end is that which will justify such means as these? Could it be *religion?* Such is the pretence. The cry of *Church and King* was as loud and incessant in all this horrid business, as that of *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*, during the tumult in which the life of *Paul* was in danger. [*Acts* xix. 29.] The spirit of those in power was precisely the same in both cases, and led to the same outrages. At *Ephesus*, however, a prudent magistrate restrained the violence of the mob. Whereas here no such wisdom or vigour was found, or if it was exerted, it was to no purpose; and, therefore, the most brutal excesses were committed without restraint. The most savage of *Goths* and *Vandals* were not guilty of greater ravages, or had less respect for learning or science. When the spirit of unbridled licentiousness was once let loose, it was not in the power even of those who first promoted the business to put a stop to it; but beginning with religion, it ended in almost indiscriminate plunder.

It is mortifying to Christianity, and even to human nature, to reflect upon these scenes; but they are not uninstructive. We see in them the dreadful nature of bigotry and blind zeal, and should thence learn to avoid it and every thing that leads to it. We should more especially inculcate upon our own minds, and on the minds of others, that religion is a thing to be supported by reason and argument only, that it concerns nothing but God and men's own consciences, and that the rights of conscience are inviolable; that being all in the same state of darkness, we should think and judge for ourselves only, and not for others; leaving every man to the righteous judgment of God. To our own master we each of us stand or fall.

But while men are suffered to act and think as they see fit in all matters of religion, provided they do not disturb others, *evil-doers*, on whatever pretence, should be punished; and robbers and murderers should not be spared, because they may imagine that by robbery or murder they do God service. Let the late scenes impress these sentiments deeply on our minds, and the lesson, though an awful one, will not have been given us in vain. We should henceforth live together in greater peace and harmony than ever; all of us worshipping God according to the dictates of our own consciences, and no man molesting another on this or any other account.

III. Let us who are sufferers be careful to indulge no spirit of resentment or revenge, but *take patiently the spoiling of our goods*, and rejoice that we suffer not for evil-doing, but for righteousness' sake. If we suffer on this account, and bear our sufferings in a proper manner, as becomes Christians, great will be our reward in heaven.

We should not think there is any thing *new* or extraordinary in our sufferings. The same has been the fate of Christians in all ages. We were sufficiently apprized by our Saviour himself, that men would "revile *us*, and persecute *us*, and *speak* all manner of evil against *us* falsely, for *his* sake."* Nay, that even those who should kill his disciples, would *think they did God service*. But we are pronounced to be *blessed* when this is the case, and shall receive a noble equivalent and recompence for it. "If we suffer with *Christ*, we shall also reign with him," and be "glorified together." [2 *Tim.* ii. 12; *Rom.* viii. 17.]

* *Matt.* v. 11. See Vol. XIII. p. 73.

Let us consider what we have suffered as a sacrifice to the cause of truth and integrity, and let those who have sustained the greatest losses rejoice the most. With the apostles, let us rejoice that we are *counted worthy to suffer shame*, to incur loss, or even to lay down our lives, in the cause of truth. It is true that in our case the sacrifices we have made were not, strictly speaking, *voluntary* ones. We had no choice at the time: but a patient resignation to the Divine will may give us the same merit, and make our losses equivalent to gifts.

This calm and patient suffering must in time make a favourable impression upon our enemies themselves; for they are *men* as well as we, susceptible of good as well as bad impressions. Like all other men, they judge by the appearances that are presented to them; and though some of them may be more hardened and exasperated by the disappointment in not effecting their purpose, (which seems to have been to disperse and extirpate us,) others will distinguish true magnanimity and generosity of sentiment, and perceive the source of it in the superior excellence of our Christian principles.

Now, my brethren, we have an opportunity, an opportunity given us by God himself, and we hope not to be repeated, to shew the real strength and value of our religious principles. We have long shewn them in words, and I hope in our general conduct; but let us particularly shew them in the most unequivocal manner, on this especial occasion. If there be any thing that peculiarly distinguishes Christianity, it is its mild, forbearing, and benevolent spirit. We are commanded [*Matt.* v. 44] to *love* all men, *even our enemies*, to *do good to those who hate us, and to pray for those who despitefully use and persecute us;* and though we are not required to *forgive* them, unless they *repent*, we ought not, therefore, to bear them any ill-will, but, from the real love that we bear to them, in common with all the human race, we should endeavour to bring them into that proper state of mind in which repentance consists, in order that they may become proper objects of our forgiveness.

Hitherto, my brethren, I have been proud of you, and I have had reason to be so. You have been an example to other Christian churches in a variety of important respects, particularly in holding out to the world an open profession of the genuine, unadulterated doctrines of Christianity, and also in your forms of discipline and other regulations, calculated to promote and diffuse that Christian knowledge on

which all good practice is founded.* Let me have cause to boast of you on this occasion, by shewing an example of the meekest, the least revengeful, and the most benevolent conduct, that was ever exhibited by Christians. Let no pains be spared to exhibit your conduct, and that of your enemies, in their true light; let the cause of our late sufferings be thoroughly investigated, and made known to the world; but of punishment let us be sparing. Our countrymen will in time, though not immediately, be convinced of our innocence and merit; and let us depend on that conviction for our future security, which is all that we want, rather than on any punishment, which may eventually do more harm than good, by inflaming animosity, and thereby generating a disposition to farther injuries.

Consider, (but I know you are before-hand with me in every thing I can suggest, and, therefore, only take this opportunity of reminding myself, as well as you, of our common principles,) consider, I say, as I have observed before, but which cannot be reflected upon too often, that there is the hand of God, as well as man, in what we suffer; that his designs are always good, and that bad men are only his instruments. And though this circumstance does not lessen their crime, it naturally tends to abate our resentment.

This you see in the case of *Joseph*, who appears not to have indulged the least resentment against his brethren on account of the greatest crime but one that they could have been guilty of with respect to him, viz. the selling him for a slave; because he considered that it was part of the plan of a wise and good Providence. In his discourses with them he says nothing of their misbehaviour to him, but only observes, [*Gen.* xiv. 5,] that *God had sent him before them to provide food.* This, however, did not appear so to him when he was exposed in the public market, and bought and sold like a beast. This he did not see when he was unjustly imprisoned by his master; and perhaps it did not occur to him till after his brethren had applied to him for corn. Nor may we, my brethren, at present distinctly perceive the designs of Divine Providence in what we have suffered; but since we well know nothing can come to pass without the Divine permission, and that to him who sees into futurity, simple *permission* does not really differ from positive *appointment*, we may be satisfied that good will come out of it, good to ourselves, good to our country, and good to the world; and

* See *supra*, pp. 55—57, 458—461; Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 157.

though for the present this be unseen and unknown, let us rejoice in the full assurance of it.

But, my brethren, we may see that good must result from this calamitous event, if we conduct ourselves as we ought to do upon the occasion, and for this I will answer for you as well as for myself. We shall give the clearest proof that, different as our religious principles are from those of the Establishment, there is nothing in them hostile to others; that we are good and peaceable subjects to the State; and, what is more, that the best fruits of religion may be produced at no expense to the State, and by persons who, besides supporting their own religion, are taxed to support another, even that of those who persecute, and who would exterminate us. It will therefore appear, that civil establishments of religion are not necessary to the proper object of it, which is to ensure the performance of the duties of this life, by the hopes and fears of another. Our principles have produced this effect, not only without deriving any aid from the State, but when frowned upon by it.

It will also appear from our sufferings, that it is the civil establishment of religion that is the proper cause of such disturbances in states: for had all religious persuasions been equally favoured by the government under which we live, the members of no one church whatever would have indulged that haughty, indignant, and intolerant spirit, which is the cause of all persecution. They would not have presumed upon the countenance of the civil power to crush any other church; but all being equally protected, and equally overawed, by the same civil power, (intent upon nothing but the preservation of the peace,) all would have contented themselves with the natural means of recommending their principles, viz. reason and good behaviour. They would have expected nothing from others besides good neighbourhood and good-will; and thus the common peace would be easily and effectually kept.

All persecution has arisen from the jealousy of that church to which the state has given exclusive privileges. These, while the members of any established church are *men*, they will naturally be desirous of keeping to themselves; and they will not always attend to the propriety of the means by which they may think to secure them; especially since temporal privileges are a temptation to men of no religion to attach themselves to an established church, and to support it by such means as all true religion disclaims.

If, my brethren, our sufferings be the means of opening

the eyes of our countrymen, and of mankind, with respect to this important subject; if they shew that there is a certain evil, and a very uncertain good, in such establishments of religion, we shall have abundant reason to rejoice in them. We shall be the honoured instruments in the hand of God of a great and extensive blessing to mankind.

Lastly, these calamities, like all others to which we are subject, in this state of trial, teach us the useful lesson of the uncertainty of all temporal enjoyments, and the importance of habitually looking forwards to something more stable. The change of our condition, from the most pleasing to the most disastrous, was indeed sudden, and most unexpected. We were, it is true, sufficiently apprized of the violent spirit that had been excited against us;* but as we were conscious we had given no occasion for it, we never imagined it would break out in the manner in which it did, and we were enjoying ourselves in perfect security, when the storm, in all its fury, burst upon us. The plan of the enemy had, no doubt, been laid beforehand; but of this we had no suspicion, and, therefore, we were altogether unprepared for it.

As to myself, I did not know that I had five minutes, from the first intimation of danger to that of the necessity of flying for my life, and of leaving behind me every thing that, next to my own life, and the lives of those who were most dear to me, I most valued in the world, viz. the fruits of my labour during a great part of my life. In this our adversaries, I find, rejoice not a little; but may they never be brought into the same alarming circumstances, or sustain equal losses.

Seeing, then, the instability of all things in this world, let the event remind us of a country in which we shall have nothing of this kind to dread; a country which will be the seat of wisdom, of virtue, and of benevolence; where the voice of the oppressor shall no more be heard; but where the recollection of these scenes, as having been the means of improving our virtue, and of promoting an extensive good, will afford us the greatest satisfaction.

* A learned Barrister, who was a liberal-minded *Churchman*, thus accounts for this *excitement* of "a disciplined Banditti, professing *to obey orders*," and resounding "the cry of Church and King."

"When governors punish imputed error as convicted guilt, and mark men as a distinct race for a difference in opinion on a subject where the most unlimited exercise of private judgment is duty;—when tests, as an elegant author expresses it, 'profane the rites of the religion they pretend to guard, and usurp the dominion of the God they pretend to revere;' is it wonderful that the untaught multitude should believe the interests of Church and King may be advanced by conflagrations lighted in the houses of their fellow-citizens?" *Address to the Public*, by Mr. Geo. Rous, in "Thoughts on the Riots at Birmingham," 1791, (*Appendix*,) p. 28.

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT THE

GRAVEL-PIT MEETING, IN HACKNEY,

APRIL 19, 1793.

Being the Day appointed for a General Fast.

[*London*, 1793.]

PREFACE.

THE observing of days appointed by civil governors for the purpose of religious acts, as of public humiliation or thanksgiving, being objected to by many of my brethren, I wish to inform them, in this Preface, of the light in which I consider it, as a vindication of my own practice.

Since societies of men are as dependent on the Supreme Being as individuals, *public* worship is as proper in itself as *private*, and if a whole nation could be assembled in one place, and a person could be heard as speaking for them all, this would be as proper as the worship of a single parish. But what cannot be done in one assembly may be done in many, and if any one time (which is on several accounts most proper) be fixed upon for any act of national worship, it must be done by persons invested with civil authority. With us it is done by the king's proclamation, but as this has not, in this country, the force of law, it can only be considered as an advice or requisition, not enforced by any civil penalty; and both the *Quakers* and many *Dissenters* are well known to disobey this requisition with impunity.*

But it is said we are called upon to do a thing that we disapprove. Many persons think the war in which we are engaged, to be *unjust*, and yet we are called upon to pray for success in it, as a *just* and *necessary* war. Still, how-

* See Wakefield's "Spirit of Christianity, compared with the Spirit of the Times in Great Britain," 1794; "Civil Mandates for Days of Public Worship, no Argument against joining in it," by *John Simpson; Prot. Diss. Mag.*, 1794, I. pp. 77, 78, 157, 158.

ever, if we think the situation of the country to be such as to give propriety to an act of public humiliation and prayer, we may obey the civil magistrate in assembling on the day that he shall appoint, but use our own judgment with respect to the manner in which the service shall be conducted; and we all know that, think and act as we please, the Almighty will be directed by his own wisdom, and not by ours.

Let us suppose a number of persons on board a ship, so long becalmed as to be in danger of perishing for want of provisions, and the captain to order or advise them to pray, either by themselves, or in parties, as they shall think proper; and, conceiving that a wind from the east would soonest bring them to a safe harbour, should farther direct them to pray for *it*, while several of the crew should be of opinion, that a wind from the west would serve them better; might they not all go to their devotions at the same time, though, following their own best judgments, they should pray for whatever wind they thought proper, or with true piety pray for relief in general, or, with more piety still, content themselves with expressing their entire resignation to the will of God, whether he should think proper to relieve them or not?

On this principle, my predecessor Dr. Price,* as well as myself, and many other Dissenters, always observed the days appointed for public fasts in the course of the *American* war, though we by no means adopted the language of the prayers published by authority for the use of the clergy on those occasions.

It cannot be supposed that, in a whole nation, consisting of several millions of persons, there should be only one opinion with respect to all, or almost any, measures of administration. It may be taken for granted, that if they think at all, they will think differently; and, consequently, if they be honest men, they will be disposed to act differently, except that, in cases of a merely *civil* nature, they will think it right to acquiesce in the decision of the majority, whatever it be. For without this, the society must be dissolved.

I will take this opportunity, however, of observing, that as it is right in the minority to submit to the decision of the majority, it will be wise in the majority to bear with any mere difference of opinion in the minority, and to throw no impediment in the way of the freest discussion of their differences. For, this is the only method of detecting error,

* See his *Fast* Sermons, Feb. 10, 1779, and Feb. 21, 1781.

speculative or practical, and of improving the condition of man; and no institution of man can be absolutely perfect.

Every attempt to suppress opinion by force, is such a confession of the weakness of any cause, and of an utter inability to maintain it by reason and argument, that there is no instance in history in which it has answered, or in which it has not operated to overturn what it was intended to establish. What did an *Index Expurgatorius*, copious as it was, do for the *Church of Rome?* On this account I am concerned to see, what looks like the commencement of an *Index Expurgatorius* for the *Constitution of England.*

In cases in which the commands of man are apprehended to interfere with the commands of God, there can be no hesitation which we ought to prefer; and therefore a wise nation will carefully avoid all unnecessary interference of civil government with matters of religion. For, as men who think at all, will think differently, to enforce obedience to any commands, which some persons may apprehend to be contrary to the laws of God and the dictates of conscience, may be to alienate the affections of the most valuable members of the community, and lead to their banishment and extirpation, which cannot be for the advantage of any state.

This is my apology for the freedom with which I have, upon all occasions, advanced such opinions as have appeared to me to be true and important, though contrary to those which have the countenance of the State, and also against all connexion between religion and civil government; and a good opportunity of repeating my testimony against this abuse of religion having occurred in this discourse, I have not declined availing myself of it.

In no other respects will it be pretended that I have, on this occasion, obtruded my opinion with respect to any political subject. If persons of all parties would cultivate that spirit of piety, which it has been my endeavour to inculcate in this discourse, it would tend to lessen their animosity against each other, and would either unite them in the same views of things, or remove every real inconvenience from the circumstance of their differing.

I have not, I own, concurred with the views of the governing powers of this nation, in praying for the success of our arms in this war, any more than I did in that with *America;* because I do not think that such success would be of any advantage to this country,* and in this I am by no means

* Or deserved in such a contest, Dr. Priestley might have added, according to his well-known just and liberal opinions on this subject.

singular. But I sincerely pray that the war may terminate in the firmer establishment of the liberties and happiness of this country, and of every other country in *Europe;* and whether it be victory or defeat that will most conduce to this end, I sincerely wish and pray for it.

I have not scrupled at intervals to intimate my apprehensions, that the present war, whatever be its progress or termination, will only be the beginning of troubles in *Europe;* and in this, I own, I have greater apprehensions from the success, than from the defeat, of the present combination against *France.* But I do not pretend to prophesy, and I sincerely pray that the evils which I fear are approaching, may be deferred as long as possible, and that the wisdom and moderation of our councils may contribute to so good an end. Let this country treat me as it will, I shall always remember with satisfaction the happiness I have enjoyed in it, as more than a balance for the injuries I have received from it. I am conscious that I have always meant to act the part of a good citizen, whether my services have been acceptable or not, and however I may be disposed of, I shall always be a sincere friend and well-wisher to my native country.

Mr. Burke has said in the House of Commons, that I have "declared hostility to the Constitution of this country." But after being publicly and repeatedly called upon to produce any authority for his assertion, it now sufficiently appears, that he has neither ability to maintain his charge, nor virtue to retract it. If I be an enemy to this country, I was so during more than twenty years of my acquaintance with him. For, the freest of my writings, in which I declared myself most hostile to the civil establishment of Christianity, as a part of the Constitution of this country, was published before I knew him; and of this he never in all that time intimated the least disapprobation. If there be men who are really dangerous in any country, they are such calumniators as he; and if any mischief is to be apprehended to this country from political writings, it has been wholly occasioned by his own.

With some whose apprehensions are greater than their wisdom, every person who proposes any reformation in the constitution, is an enemy to it, and to wish for a change in the Constitution, is to be an enemy to the country. But surely a man may be a friend both to his country and the constitution of it, without thinking either of them to be the best possible, or the best in the world. All that reason

requires is, that a man conform to the laws, and support the government of his country when called upon to do it; and this I should be ready to do if I lived in Turkey, and had been protected by the government of it; protection and support being reciprocal duties.

Even in this most arbitrary government, I should not suppose that it would be deemed treasonable, or seditious, to maintain in argument, that there might be, and that there actually were, better forms of government than theirs. The expectations of some persons with respect to the government of this country, by *King, Lords, and Commons*, are as ridiculous as the conduct of the knights errant in the days of chivalry, so much regretted by Mr. Burke,* in which they thought themselves obliged to maintain, that all the ladies to whose service they had devoted themselves, were, without exception, the most beautiful and accomplished of women.

All good is relative, and therefore what is the best for Englishmen, with their peculiar habits and prejudices, may not be the best for all nations. And the system that answers its purpose so well, as that it shall not be worth while to risk any material change, or revolution, may yet be capable of much improvement. Indeed, if the injuries it receives from time be not repaired, it will at length become quite another thing, from that which had been the subject of our encomiums. It will be, to use a comparison not quite so grave as the occasion might require, like repeating to an old woman of eighty, the poems that were addressed to her when she was twenty. The old lady might be well enough pleased with the flattery, and the flatterer might succeed in gaining her good graces, and something to compensate for the ridicule to which he would expose himself; but he certainly would make himself the subject of ridicule. In this situation, according to uncontradicted report, stands Mr. Burke.

As my *Letter to the Editor of the Morning Chronicle*, in reply to the calumny of Mr. Burke, has only appeared in the Newspapers, and many of my readers may not have seen it, I shall subjoin it to this Preface.

Now that I have occasion to mention the subject of *calumny*, by which I have already suffered so much, and, in the present state of men's minds, am exposed to suffer still

* In the recollection of his "delightful vision" of "the Queen of France, then the Dauphiness, at Versailles.—I thought," he exclaims, "ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult. But the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, œconomists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever." Burke's *Reflections*, 1790, pp. 112, 113.

more, I shall observe that, in an account of the state of Birmingham, transmitted to the ministry on the 14th of December last, and which is become the subject of much conversation, it is said, that "the only people there from whom any thing is to be apprehended, are some young men brought up under Priestley."

This information could only proceed from ignorance or malice. All the young men to whom I ever gave any lectures in Birmingham, were those of my own congregation, on the subject of *Natural and Revealed Religion*, as I now do at Hackney, and to whom I never mentioned the subject of *politics*. And I think I can engage for all of them, that, whatever be their political opinions, which they could not learn from me, they may be depended upon, from a principle of religion, for a quiet submission to the laws of their country, whether they approve of them or not.

To the Editor of the Morning Chronicle.

SIR,

Taking it for granted that your account of Mr. Burke's speech, in the debate on Mr. Sheridan's late motion,* may be depended upon, I beg leave, through the channel of your paper, to ask him, what authority he had for asserting, as he did, that "I gave my name to the sentiments in the Correspondence of the Revolution Society in England with the Jacobin Societies in France; sentiments adverse to our Constitution"? That *Correspondence* I have seen, but have not yet read. I am not, nor ever was, a member of any political society whatever; nor did I ever sign any paper originating with any of them. This I do not say because I have any objection to such societies, but my studies and pursuits have been of a different kind.

I also wish to ask Mr. Burke what authority he has for asserting, that "I was made a citizen of France, because I had declared hostility to the Constitution of England"? This assertion, like the preceding, is nothing else than a malignant calumny;† being an untruth, which, in the present state of things, is calculated to do me the greatest injury. I was made a citizen of France at the same time with Mr. Wilberforce, and several others; and I had no

* March 4, 1793. For "a committee to consider of the seditious practices referred to in his Majesty's speech." See *New An. Reg.* XIV. pp. 69—73.

† During the debate, Mr. Fox "remarked, that six of Mr. Burke's assertions had been confuted in one day." *New An. Reg.* XIV. p. 72.

more previous knowledge of the measure than he had; and will Mr. Burke say that Mr. Wilberforce was made a citizen of France "because *he* had declared hostility to the Constitution of this country"?

Though few of my publications relate to politics, I have more than once expressed myself in favour of our *Constitution*,* and I call upon Mr. Burke to shew that I have ever written any thing that can, by any fair construction, be said to be *against* it. I conceive myself to be a much better friend to the true principles of it than he now is. When Mr. Burke and I were acquainted, and we used to converse on the subject of politics (for we had hardly any other common topic) our sentiments respecting the Constitution, and the principles of liberty in general, were, as I then conceived, the same. Had I been in his present situation with respect to the favours of government,† my opinions might have changed as his have done; but continuing in the same situation in that respect, my views of things have continued the same.

I would observe on this occasion, that I do not see the wisdom of making persons enemies of the *Constitution* whether they will or not. If the time should come, that this Constitution shall want the aid of all its friends, those who are now the most forward to declare their attachment to it, may not be the most to be depended upon. If we learn any thing from history or observation, it is, that boasting and insolence are generally followed by cowardice, and that patient suffering is the mark of the truest courage.

Mr. Burke's sneering at me for "not having been sufficiently rewarded for my great services in *philosophy, politics, and religion*," is a mean insult, in one basking in the sunshine of power, on an old acquaintance who is under its frowns. What does Mr. Burke know of my services in philosophy, or religion; when the probability is, that he is utterly unacquainted with any thing that I have written on these subjects? When have I made any boast of my services, whatever they be, or intimated any expectation of a reward; though every man who gives his time to any important subject, deserves the thanks of his countrymen, whatever may have been his success? However, far from expecting any reward, I shall think myself very happy if I escape without farther punishment. But that party spirit, which is so much inflamed by the writings and speeches of

* See Vol. IX. p. 4, *Note* †.

† See *supra*, pp. 418, 440, *Notes* *.

Mr. Burke, gives me but little encouragement to expect so much.

Submitting these observations to the cooller thoughts (if he have any such) of Mr. Burke, and of your numerous readers, among some of whom I hope to meet with candour,

I remain, Sir,

Your very humble servant,

J. PRIESTLEY.

Clapton, March 7, 1793.

FAST SERMON,

For 1793.

PSALM xlvi. 1:

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

My Christian Brethren,

WE are called upon by the governors of the nation, alarmed, no doubt, at the present serious and very critical state of public affairs, to humble ourselves before God, by fasting and prayer, that, as the Supreme Disposer of all events, he may be pleased to avert the calamities with which we are threatened. With this call, we voluntarily and cheerfully comply. For though, in every thing respecting God, and our duty to him, we disclaim all human authority, praying when and how we please, we are ready to join with any of our brethren, of whatever denomination, in any act of religion in which we are equally concerned.

None, I trust, are more sensible than we of this Christian society are, of the universal dominion of God; that the fate of our nation, and of every other nation, is at all times in his hands; that nothing can come to pass without his appointment or permission; and that he never appoints or permits any thing but for the best of purposes, respecting the happiness of his creatures, of whom he is the true and common Parent.

In this interesting situation, as creatures before their Creator, we have nothing to do with what are called *politics*. We neither praise nor blame those who have the conduct of public affairs, for bringing us into this situation, or even

consider whether they have brought us into this situation or not. We have at this time nothing to do with the justice or injustice, according to the rules of human judgment, of the war in which we are engaged, or of any other measures of administration. For we are now to consider *primary*, and not *secondary* causes. We are to consider every thing that has taken place as the act of God, and not that of man, whom the Supreme Being only employs as his instrument, to bring about his great designs.

In other situations, our judgments being as free as those of other men, we may freely praise or blame. We may, with our governors, call the war in which we are engaged *just* and *necessary*, or, with many others, unjust and unnecessary: for, with respect to things of this nature, men will judge differently, according to the different views they have of things. But with respect to God, whose providence we now acknowledge, we must suppose every thing to be right; that if calamity await us, it was proper, in the general plan of things, that it should befal us, and therefore that we must submit to it, as under the righteous government of God; having recourse to such methods as are necessary to regain his favour, by making ourselves the proper objects of it: that whatever it be that has been made the instrument of our affliction, it may be removed.

I do not know any portion of scripture more proper for the subject of our meditations, according to this general view of things, and the present circumstances of the nation, than the whole of the Psalm from which my text is taken. It contains such sentiments, as, if properly impressed upon our minds, cannot fail to exhibit what is most calamitous and alarming in it, in the most favourable light that it will bear. It shews us the hand of God in all the great events that affect the welfare of society; thence leading us to expect a happy conclusion of them, and in the mean time to make the best use of the scenes before us.

It is true that, in the language of this Psalm, *desolation is now spreading over the earth.* The flames of war are extending themselves, in a manner unknown, in any period of our times, and threatening us with calamities altogether new, and therefore such as we cannot tell how to guard against, or to prepare for. But we are here reminded, that though the passions and the hands of men are employed as the instruments, they are the desolations that *God* is making in the earth; and we are invited to view them with attention and without dread, as any other of the works of God.

"Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth!"

We are also led by the Psalmist, in the darkest scenes of providence, to put our trust in that Being who directs the whole, not doubting but that he will bring good out of all the evil. "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be *glorified in* the Heathen. I will be exalted in the earth." And if God be finally glorified, we may be assured, that the issue of all, will be the virtue and happiness of men. He is the common Parent of all mankind, and these are the corrections that he is administering for our common benefit.

From this *Psalm* we learn, that it becomes good men in particular to have an eye to the hand of God in all events, and never to forget, that, tempestuous as the times may be, there is an able though invisible pilot at the helm; a pilot who commands not only the ship, but the waves themselves; so that we have all the reason in the world to make ourselves perfectly easy as to the final issue. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.—The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge."

Lastly, we are here taught to assure ourselves, that when wars, like diseases or any other evils, shall have answered the ends for which they were sent, (and we cannot doubt but that they will answer these ends, and no other,) he who raised the storm will cause it to cease. "He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth. He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder. He burneth the chariot in the fire."

In order to throw our thoughts into a proper channel on this occasion, I shall, in this discourse, in the first place, consider war as the work of God, shewing that, calamitous as it is, it is, like all other evils, calculated to produce many good effects; and is therefore no unsuitable means to be employed by the benevolent Ruler of the universe. In the second place, I shall consider what we, as under the moral government of God, must do in order to remove the evil of war, and every other judgment inflicted upon us by a wise and just Providence; and in the last place, I shall endeavour to suggest such observations, as appear to me to result from the doctrine on which I shall insist, and to be particularly adapted to the present state of the nation.

In the first place, I propose to consider war as the work of God, shewing that, calamitous as it is, it is calculated to produce many good effects, and is therefore no unsuitable means to be employed by the benevolent Ruler of the universe, though generally implying the greatest guilt in *men*, who, to gratify their ambition, revenge, and other passions, knowingly involve millions of their fellow-creatures, for whom they have no feeling of compassion, in the most complicated distress.

War does not materially differ from other afflictions, by which God is pleased to instruct the world, and correct the vices of it. The discipline is, no doubt, severe, but it is calculated to be salutary. A state of perfect security, we well know, is highly unfavourable to virtue, and, consequently, to happiness. Without the alarms of war, mankind, in the early and rude state of society, would have sunk into such a state of indulgence, as they were never known to enjoy without sinking into vices fatal to the health of their bodies, and to the tranquillity of their minds; and having no distant enemy to unite them among themselves, and promote those virtues which arise from a sense of having a common cause and interest, as benevolence and public spirit; instead of one enemy, who would give men disturbance now and then, they would in fact have many, who would have it in their power to do them perpetual injuries; and they might suffer more by continual ill-offices, from those with whom they had a constant and necessary intercourse, than from an enemy more distant. Also a state of great exertion, such as war makes necessary, is always a state of great animation; and this is better for man than a state of languor, which, till men be duly improved by discipline and instruction, they would naturally sink into.

War, by operating like the pestilence and other diseases, and various calamitous accidents, in rendering life precarious, is the discipline of a wise and kind Providence, having very obvious uses. Since a constant sense of the uncertainty of life, and of all its enjoyments, is far better calculated to form excellent characters, in the present state of our minds, in other respects, than the idea of absolute certainty with respect to life, or any thing to be enjoyed in it. It teaches us caution, vigilance, vigorous exertion, fortitude, and resignation to the will of God; qualities without which there would be nothing to be greatly admired or esteemed in human nature. To suppose that men might have been trained to these virtues without the calamities of war, or

discipline of a similar nature, which render life and property uncertain, is what we are by no means authorized to do by observation or experience.

Besides these benefits resulting from a state of war, as from evils of other kinds, which make a necessary part of the general discipline of the world, many positive benefits have been indirectly derived from it. The exercise of the ingenuity of man, in devising the means of offence and defence in war, led the way to the discovery of the qualities of metals, improvements in mechanics, and other things highly useful in times of peace; discoveries which, it is probable, that nothing but so strong a stimulus as results from a state of war, could have excited man to make.

Conquests made by war have contributed to mix, and thereby to civilize, the different nations of the world, when they might otherwise have continued much longer in that state of barbarism which would have resulted from this want of intercourse with each other.

War has also been the means of carrying learning and learned men where they would never have gone voluntarily; and thus science and improvements of various kinds have had a more rapid spread in the world. We complain, and justly, of persecution for conscience' sake, as the most unjust and cruel of all wars; consisting in the oppression of the wise, the virtuous, and the weak, by the ignorant, the wicked, and the strong. But by this means true religion has had a much more speedy and extensive spread in the world, than it could otherwise have obtained. Both the *peopling* and the *present liberties* of the North American States were owing to the oppression of this country;* and we cannot say that it would ever have been peopled and civilized by Christian inhabitants, or its liberties have been established by any other means. At the same time, then, that we justly blame the designs and the conduct of men who, to gratify their own passions, brought so much misery on their fellow-creatures, let us acknowledge and bless the hand of God, which, by means of so much evil, has brought about so much good.

But though it cannot be denied that war has been productive of many and great benefits to mankind, it is a kind of discipline that we shall not stand in need of, when the world shall have passed its state of childhood and youth, in which we must consider it at present; and when we

* See *supra*, pp. 447, 480.

shall be arrived at a state of greater maturity, in which we shall be capable of what may be called a more liberal treatment. Having learned wisdom by long experience, we shall be able to proceed in the paths of knowledge, virtue, and happiness, without those severities which were necessary to draw us into them.

Whatever foundation there may be for this comparison of the whole human race to the individuals of which it is composed, we are expressly assured in the Scriptures, that the happy time will come, when *wars shall cease*. We may therefore conclude, that hereafter they will be no longer necessary. "It shall come to pass in the last days," (*Isaiah* ii. 24,) that men "shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." This most pleasing prospect is confirmed by the concurrent testimony of many other prophecies. We may, therefore, look forward to it with the most assured hope and joy.

This great event will probably be brought about by natural and adequate causes. Men will at length be convinced, though by long and dear-bought experience, that wars have almost always been made to gratify the ambition or avarice of a few, at the expense of every thing that is dear to the many. Also, both a spirit of commerce, which is extending every day, and the true principles of Christianity, which we cannot but think will be better understood and more generally diffused, the more attention is given to it, will, no doubt, greatly contribute to bring about so desirable an end.

In the second place I am to shew, what we must do in order to remove the calamities of war, or any other judgment inflicted by a wise and righteous Providence; and in order to do this, I shall take a more particular view of the conduct of Divine Providence with respect to war, and national calamities of every kind, shewing that they do not come without the will of God, and in consequence of his displeasure; and, therefore, that we have no reason to expect that the effect will cease till the cause be removed.

Now we cannot too often or too seriously reflect, and, therefore, I repeat the observation, that, in the situation in which we now are, we have nothing to do with the share that *men* have had in the calamities we feel, or those that we fear; but to consider the hand that *God* has had in them; that, considering what we have done to make him our

enemy, we may do every thing that is in our power to make him our friend. For the present, therefore, let us look off from men, in order to look upwards towards God, and inwards upon ourselves.

If we believe that the world is under the administration of Divine Providence; (and surely he that made the world will not neglect to attend to it; he that formed men will not fail to watch over them;) if we believe that nothing can come to pass through the whole extent of the works of God, without his knowledge and influence; that *he does whatsoever he pleases in the armies of heaven above, and among the inhabitants of the earth here beneath*, we must believe with the prophet *Amos*, (iii. 6,) that, properly speaking, there is *no evil in any city* or state, but God is the author of it; and, therefore, that the evil will not be removed till he shall think proper to remove it, the real occasion of it being removed in the first place.

If the immediate cause of our sufferings be enemies without, or the bad conduct of our rulers at home, (for I mean to comprehend the political views of all parties,) still it is by the permission of God, who ruleth among the children of men, that any country has such enemies or such rulers. Bad ministers may be obtruded upon an earthly sovereign, who, being no more than a man, may be deceived by men, and mistake his own interest, as well as that of his people; but they cannot be obtruded upon a Being of perfect discernment and uncontrolled power.

If *David* was *a man after God's own heart* for one purpose, *Nebuchadnezzar* was no less so for another. The proud king of Assyria is expressly called *a staff in the hand of God*, for the punishment of various nations, and he could do nothing but what the hand which held the staff directed. In the eye of the world, particular men are said to be out of their place, or unfit for it; but in the eye of God, no man is out of his place. Pharaoh himself is expressly said (*Exod.* ix. 16) to have been *raised up* by God for one of the greatest purposes in the course of his providence. In fact, every person, without exception, is where God has placed him; and it is arraigning the wisdom of his providence, to say that he has placed him wrong, or that, however men may be disappointed in him, he is not qualified to act the part that God has given him to act; and if his counsels or conduct bring calamity upon any country, it was precisely what God intended they should do.

The death of *seventy thousand* Israelites by pestilence, is ascribed to the pride and folly of *David*, in ordering the people to be numbered; but, then, that thought is said to have arisen in the heart of David, because the Divine Being thought proper to punish that people. For in the following manner is the history of that event introduced, 2 *Sam.* xxiv. 1: "And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah." So also the destruction of Jerusalem, and the captivity of the Jews by *Nebuchadnezzar*, were brought about by the infatuation of the last of their kings, *Zedekiah;* but that very calamity had been threatened and foretold, again and again, before Zedekiah was born, as a punishment for the long-prevailing wickedness of the people in general. It is the same God who still rules in the affairs of men. The maxims of his government are also the same. He still punishes sinful nations, by means of weak or wicked governors, and by wars and other calamities, occasioned by the weakness or wickedness of such governors; *and who shall say unto him, What doest thou?*

It becomes us, therefore, now that we are assembled in the presence of God, to have respect to *him* and to his providence, and to overlook the part that men may have had in our calamities. With respect to the war in which we are now engaged, some of you will entertain one opinion, and others of you a different one. But on this occasion, we have nothing to do with the opinions or politics of any party. What we have now to consider is simply this, that it has pleased the Ruler of the universe to afflict almost all Europe with the dreadful calamity of war, and, therefore, that all we suffer, or have to suffer, is the consequence of the Divine displeasure; and we are assured, (*Lam.* iii. 33,) that *he never afflicts willingly, or grieves the children of men.*

What we have to do, then, is, by due humility before God, who *loveth righteousness, and hateth iniquity*, and by proper conduct with respect to him, to endeavour to recover his favour, since he alone can remove the scourge that he has brought upon us. And he can be no more at a loss for proper and natural means to effect this design of mercy, than he was to effect his designs of judgment. If we *acknowledge God in all our ways*, and by approving our hearts and our conduct before him, make it fit that we should be reinstated in our late enviable situation, he will

easily provide the means of doing it. *Let us only return to the Lord our God*, and, as we read *Hos.* vi. 1, *he will return to us; and as he has torn, he will also heal us; as he has smitten, so he will bind us up.*

This doctrine of the hand of God being in all events, ought by no means to slacken our endeavours to better our condition in any respect; because God works by means of the natural passions, and the natural activity of man. It is God who gives us, day by day, our daily bread, which we are, therefore, instructed daily to pray for, as his gift; and yet we diligently plough and sow the ground, and use other natural means to procure bread, well knowing that it cannot be obtained without those means. In like manner, God has wisely provided, in the course of his providence, that wisdom and virtue have a strict and necessary connexion with the prosperity of a nation. "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people." *Prov.* xiv. 34.

As to the particulars of our national sins, which, on a day of public fasting and humiliation, we seem to be called upon to confess and forsake, I shall not, for obvious reasons, endeavour to point them out to you. With respect to sins of a *personal* nature, all men are nearly agreed; but as to sins that are properly *national*, such as have had the concurrence of the governing powers of the nation, and which they alone can put a stop to, different persons will form very different opinions. Nay, the very same things, the same political measures, that some persons consider as highly iniquitous, and calling down the vengeance of God upon the nation, others think just, necessary, and on every account deserving the highest applause. Let each person, then, judge for himself, and do whatever may be in his power towards the reformation of what he shall deem to be amiss.

While I am exhorting to repentance and reformation of manners, as the only effectual means of removing national calamities, by securing the favour of Divine Providence, I am far from thinking that, with respect to morals, we are worse than other nations; though, considering our superior advantages, with respect to knowledge and instruction, this may be the case. Nay, it by no means follows, that though we should be even better than other nations, our sufferings may not be great and exemplary. We see that the most innocent individuals are often, for wise and excellent purposes, made to drink deep of the cup of affliction; and,

particularly, it has not been unfrequent, in the conduct of Divine Providence, to make nations mutual scourges to each other, and even for the virtuous to suffer most in the first place, though greater punishments be reserved for the more wicked, afterwards.

In that most just war of the eleven tribes against that of *Benjamin*, the former sustained several severe defeats, though the guilty tribe was almost exterminated at the last. [*Judges* xix., xx.] As we read, 1 *Peter* iv. 17, 18: "Judgment *may* begin at the house of God." But, "if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

Let us, then, humble ourselves before God, and, while his "judgments are *abroad* in the earth," (*Isa.* xxvi. 9,) let us *all*, without distinction, "learn righteousness," and be disposed to peace. Let us, more especially, take care that a state of war, though conceived to be ever so just and necessary, do not excite a spirit of revenge, and lead us to exult in the calamities of our fellow-creatures. It is the duty of a Christian to *weep with all that weep*, though the sufferers be our declared enemies. All men are our brethren, and, like our common Parent, we should neither inflict, nor wish any evil, but what we think will be productive of good to them, as well as to ourselves. This, if we must be at war, is to make war like men, and like Christians, if such an idea was not in itself absurd. Every thing else is brutal rage, and savage barbarism.

We should ever consider war as a most undesirable means to a very desirable end. Peace should ever be our great object; and to delight in war itself, without any respect to that end, is nothing better than a disposition to robbery and murder, sanctified, indeed, by the laws of men, and disguised by other names; but the same thing in the eye of reason and of God.

This observation is fully applicable to the war in which we are now engaged with the people of France, especially as they are our neighbours, to whom, as such, we owe every kind and friendly office, and with whom every act of hostility, as of bad neighbourhood in any other case, ought to be the subject of particular regret. For neighbouring nations, like neighbouring families, have it much in their *power* to assist and befriend each other, and are, therefore, under a *natural obligation* so to do.

This leads me, in the last place, to make such observations, and suggest such advices, as appear to me to result

from the doctrine on which I have been insisting, and to be particularly suitable to the present state of this country.

1. The consideration of God being the ultimate and proper author of all events, and, consequently, of any calamity in which we may be involved, naturally tends to lessen our resentment against men, as only the instruments in the hand of God; though, in a just view of things, it does not affect our persuasion of their guilt, which depends altogether on their dispositions and designs, and not on those of the Being who makes use of them, and who brings good out of the evil that they intended.

This habitual regard to God in all events, evidently had this happy effect on the mind of *Joseph*. He never expressed any resentment against his brethren on account of their selling him into *Egypt*, though, for many years, he had been a great sufferer by their shocking injustice and inhumanity. He even seemed desirous that they should not reflect upon themselves for it; so far did his piety and benevolence carry him. "Now, therefore," says he to them, (*Gen.* xlv. 5, 7,) "be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life;—to preserve you a posterity in the earth." Again, when they applied to him after the death of their father, intreating him to forgive them, agreeably to his dying request, he said, *Gen.* l. 19—21, "Fear not; for am I in the place of God? As for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now, therefore, fear ye not. I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them."

The same consideration was the means of restraining the anger of *David* against *Shimei*, who cursed him so bitterly in his flight from *Absalom*, saying, (2 *Sam.* xvi. 10,) "So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David."

From this principle, every truly pious person, who acknowledges the hand of God in all events, is disposed to regard the wicked, as well as the weak, with more compassion than anger; and this has a much happier effect on the mind, both in calming its own emotions, and exciting our endeavours to promote the reformation and welfare of others.

If the situation of our country, in the eye of God, be such as really to require the calamities we experience, or

those that we fear, it is vain to indulge our resentment against the mere instruments of them; for if they were removed, others would be found, till the ends of Divine Providence were fully answered.

This consideration should not, however, lead us to a tame and blind acquiescence in all political measures, nor prevent our endeavours to do ourselves justice, whenever we conceive that we have received an injury, and the redress of it is in our power; but by leading us to look, in the first place, to the primary cause of our sufferings, our attention will be more calm, and our endeavours better directed, with respect to the secondary cause of them; and we shall be better prepared either to suffer with resignation, or to act with vigour, as occasion may require.

In all cases, the piety of a true Christian will abate much of his animosity against men. He will wish well to his country, (though not exclusively of the rest of his brethren of mankind,) and he will endeavour to make himself as useful as he possibly can; but he will be most solicitous to promote the cause of virtue and religion, confident that this is the best means of averting national calamities of every kind; that men and statesmen, friends or enemies, are only instruments in the hands of God; and that good will be made to result from all evil.

2. The war in which we are now engaged, though peculiar in its nature, and threatening to be peculiarly calamitous to all the nations concerned in it, besides being attended with the advantage to be expected from calamity in general, in making men serious, repressing vice and excess of every kind, and inculcating moderation and sobriety of mind, promises to be peculiarly *instructive*, with respect to matters both of a civil and of an ecclesiastical nature.

This war, in common with most others, is in part, no doubt, a war of ambition; the parties concerned in the alliance against France (probably all of them, except ourselves) hoping to be gainers, by getting an additional extent of territory, little as such an addition of dominion contributes to the real benefit of the subjects, though it adds to the imaginary glory of the prince. But what is peculiar to this war is, that it is a war respecting *the principles of government*, and, therefore, necessarily leads to the discussion of the subject, infinitely more than any writings; and all discussion leads to knowledge, and all real knowledge, to improvement. We may expect, therefore, that, whatever be the issue of the present war, with respect to victories

or defeats, it will lead to the melioration of the condition of men, as members of civil society.

3. This war is sometimes called a war of *religion*, it being thought that, in the new government of *France*, there is to be no proper establishment of any form of religion whatever. Here, then, will be another great experiment added to that in *North America*, to decide the question, whether the business of *religion*, and that of *civil government*, can be better conducted separately, or in conjunction. But, in fact, experience has already decided this great question. We have already seen what it is that an establishment of religion has been able to do in *France*. Under what mode of government, in this respect, was the great number of unbelievers, that is so much complained of in France, formed, but under an establishment, a form of religion prescribed and provided for by the state? It is not even pretended, that, excepting the case of the emigrant clergy, they have been the *irreligious* that have banished the *religious;* for it is acknowledged that the emigrant *noblesse* had as little religion as the members of the *National Convention*, all of whom, however, are by no means unbelievers in Christianity. In fact, the civil establishment of Christianity had almost extinguished every thing of real Christianity in the country; the superior clergy themselves, having, by repute, as little of it as the noblesse. And it will not be pretended, that the *Atheism*, now so generally ascribed to the French nation, was produced by the Revolution, and did not exist in the country before. Can it be doubted, then, but that a friend to real Christianity must be an enemy to the civil establishment of it?

4. As a believer in revelation, and consequently in prophecy, I am led by the present aspect of things, to look forward to events of the greatest magnitude and importance, leading to the final happy state of the world. At every idea of this kind, unbelievers will smile. But I am now addressing a society of Christians, believers in revelation and in prophecy, as well as myself; and I see no reason to be ashamed of this belief.

Three great events seem to be pretty clearly announced in the prophetical books of Scripture, and to have a connexion with each other, viz. the fall of *Antichrist*, (probably the Papal power,) that of the *Turkish* empire, and the return of the Jews to their own country, *Judea*. And, according to the uniform language of prophecy, this last event is to be

preceded by a state of very great calamity, such as the world had never known before. In *Daniel* (xii. 1) it is said, *that* "shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered."

I am far from being singular in my ideas on this subject. Dr. Hartley, one of the greatest and most intelligent, as well as one of the best of men, takes it for granted, that great "temporal evils and woes," as he says, "will probably fall upon the nominal Christian states of these western parts, the Christian *Babylon*," as he styles them, "before the great revolution predicted in the Scriptures; before the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ."*

After pointing out the probable causes of this great calamity, he says, "It would be great rashness to fix a time for the breaking of the storm that hangs over our heads; as it is blindness and infatuation not to see it, not to be aware that it may break. And yet this infatuation has always attended all falling states. The kingdoms of *Judah* and *Israel* were thus infatuated. Let no one," he then adds, "deceive himself, or others. The present circumstances of the world are extraordinary and critical, beyond what has ever yet happened."† If they were so when he wrote, [1749,] how much more are they so now?

The power of the *Pope* is now rapidly on the decline. It has lost its best supports; and *France*, which gave the popes their temporal sovereignty, is now most hostile to them. This exactly agrees with the prophecies. All the other powers of *Europe*, which have had but "one mind," (*Rev.* xvii. 13,) and have given "their power and strength unto the beast," as this Antichristian power is also called; these are all [*vers.* 16, 17] to *hate the harlot*, (as the same power is also termed,) to "make her desolate and *bare*, and *even to* eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God *will* put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdoms to the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled."

The *Turkish* empire also seems to be shaking to its base, so that it will probably soon fall; and then, though I own no present appearances favour the expectation, I shall look with confidence for the accomplishment of

* *Observations*, II. p. 440. (*P.*) † *Ibid.* p. 455. (*P.*

the numerous prophecies relating to the restoration of the Jews.

But these events are to be preceded by great calamities, such as now perhaps we see the beginning of. Happy, my brethren, they who, by the help of a firm faith in the providence of God, and obedience to his will, shall be prepared for these events; whether we be so happy as to survive the storm, and see the glorious times which are to follow, or not. But to accomplish all these events will, probably, be a work of considerable time.

5. While, with the feelings of humanity, and as becomes Christians, we *weep with those that weep*, and who, in the present extensive calamity, will, no doubt, be very numerous, both at home among ourselves, and abroad among our allies and our enemies, let us not lose sight of those just and enlarged views of things which are suggested by the consideration, that *the Lord reigneth;* while this is the case, *the earth*, and all the inhabitants of it, have reason to *rejoice.* (*Psalm* xcvii. 1.) This consideration throws a strong beam of light on the darkest part of the scene that is now, or ever can be, before us; and will enable us, with a calm and steady eye, to attend to the origin, the progress, and the tendency of the approaching storm; to the causes and the consequences of all the great and calamitous events that will probably come before us, though our own dearest interests, and those of the persons for whom we are the most concerned, be involved in them. While we know that nothing can come to pass but by the appointment of God, the wise and benevolent ruler of the universe, we must always have more reason to hope than to fear, to rejoice than to grieve. And since the arguments for the goodness of God oblige us to suppose that there is at all times more happiness than misery in the world, and we are no less to *rejoice with those that rejoice* than to *weep with those that weep*, [*Rom.* xii. 15,] let us not fail to consider that the *evils* we may see are more than balanced by the *good* that at present we do not see, and especially by that which will be the result of the evil.

Since we have reason to believe that the world is destined to a state of great improvement in knowledge, virtue, and happiness, let us, where our conduct can have no influence, dispassionately observe the wonderful manner in which the great, though probably calamitous, events that are before us will operate to so good an end. And especially let each of us, according to our ability and opportunity, zealously co-

operate with those glorious views of Divine Providence, by doing every thing in our power to diminish the mass of evil, and to add to the common stock of knowledge, of virtue, and of happiness.

It is a great and momentous æra to which we are brought. A great improvement will, no doubt, be finally made in the condition of man, and happy will be the willing instruments of it. They are, in the language of the apostle, (2 *Cor.* vi. 1,) "workers together with God." Whether we be immediately employed in advancing any branch of liberal and useful knowledge, promoting the cause of public virtue, or public liberty, or any thing that tends to general happiness, we shall act an useful part in the great drama; and whether we live to finish the part we are engaged in acting, or be cut off in the midst of it, our work, or that part of it that we were appointed to perform, will be completed, and we shall receive the plaudit of our Judge, [*Matt.* xxv. 21,] *Well done, good and faithful servants.* To those who are usefully and properly employed, nothing can come amiss. And though we may not live to see the great catastrophe to which things are ripening, (for that is probably very distant,) we may rejoice in seeing as much of it as we may be permitted to see in this world; and when we awake at the resurrection, we shall find the great work, which had been the object of all our wishes and endeavours, completed in its full extent, and shall reflect with unspeakable satisfaction on the part that we ourselves have been called forth and enabled to act in it.

Lastly. In all events, whether we are called forth to do more or less, it is our never-failing consolation, that while the Lord reigneth, the earth, and especially the righteous in it, have reason to rejoice; for though "clouds and darkness *be* round about him, righteousness and judgment are the *foundation* of his throne." *Psalm* xcvii. 2.

Whatever be the fate of particular individuals, distinguished for their virtue and ability, it is wisely provided in the course of Divine Providence, that great occasions call forth, and in fact create, great characters, such as the occasions require; and by whose generous exertions the evils are surmounted, and a better state of things brought about.

If we read the history of the civil commotions in this country, in *France*, at various periods, or in *America*, we shall find extraordinary men unexpectedly rising up to act the most important parts; men who had never been heard of before,

and whom nothing but such great occasions could have produced. Read the history of the great plague in *London*,* that of *Marseilles*,† or that of any period of great calamity, of any kind, or in any country, at least a Christian one, and you will find no want of men proper for them, suitable pilots for every storm; and let us not doubt but that this will be the case, if ever any great calamity, from which no condition of man is exempt, should befal this country of ours.

It is another consolation, that seasons of war, and great calamities of any kind, cannot, in their own nature, be of long continuance. In proportion to their violence, they must be of short duration; and as, in the natural world, storms and hurricanes are of use in clearing the atmosphere, producing a better temperature of air, and a more serene and cloudless sky than could have been had without them, let us not doubt but that the same will be the issue of storms and hurricanes in the civil world, be their violence ever so great, and the devastation they make ever so extensive.

If the calamitous times that I fear are approaching should prove to be those which are announced in prophecy, as the greatest that the world shall ever experience, whatever be

* Of which De Foe's *Journal of the Plague Year* is supposed to contain "the most authentic particulars." See *Biog. Brit.* V. p. 70, *Note* [*vvv*], pp. 74, 75.

† In 1720, *when Nature sicken'd, and each gale was death*, as Pope describes the scene (*Essay on Man*, Ep. iv.) where he mentions *Marseille's good Bishop*. The exemplary self-devotion of that prelate is thus described by a contemporary, probably an eye-witness.

"In vain was he desired and pressed to go out of the town from the beginning of the plague, in order to take care to preserve the rest of his diocess; but he despised all these counsels, and regarded nothing but those things which inspir'd him with love for the flock which the Sovereign Pastor had given to his care and charge. He remain'd with an unshaken firmness and resolution to dedicate his life to the service of his sheep, till it should please God to take him to himself.

"He did not confine himself by remaining prostrate at the foot of the altar, and by lifting up his hands to heaven, to supplicate favour of Almighty God to appease his wrath; but his charity was active; he was every day in the streets, in all quarters of the town, and went into all parts to visit the sick, in the highest and most melancholy and dismal apartments of the houses, and in the streets which were spread over with dead bodies, and in all the publick places, and in the harbour and the course. The most hideous, the most abandon'd, and the most miserable, were those that he visited with the most ardency, and without fearing those mortal blasts which conveyed poison into the very heart.

"He went to them, confessed them, exhorted them to patience, and disposed them for death, filling their souls with heavenly consolations, by representing to them the happiness of affliction and poverty in this life, and left to all his abundant fruits of generosity and charity, by dispersing money every where; but above all, in secret, on those families that were desperate, and in despair, which his holy curiosity led him to find out. In order to relieve them, about 25,000 crowns had already passed through his hands, and he yet desired to pawn every thing to enable him to distribute more. Death respected this holy *Bishop*, altho' she always encompass'd him about, and moved almost under his feet." See "An Historical Account of the Plague at Marseilles, published by authority, at *Paris*, and translated from the French," 1721, pp. 74, 75.

their duration, they will, according to the same prophecies, introduce a state of things the most truly paradisiacal and happy, and of the longest continuance. It will be the proper *kingdom of God*, and *of heaven*, that kingdom which is typified by "the *little* stone" in the vision of *Nebuchadnezzar*, which was "cut out of the mountain without hands," which fell upon, and "brake in pieces" the whole of that *image* which represented all the preceding empires, and "became *itself* a great mountain *filling* the whole earth." It will take place of all other modes of government, and continue for ever. *Dan.* ii. 34, 35, 44, 45.

Coincident with the same great epocha in the state of the world may be, according to some interpretations of the book of *Revelation*, what is called, "the first resurrection," or that of the eminently wise and good in every preceding age, and especially the persecuted for righteousness' sake, who, in some sense or other, will *live and reign with Christ a thousand years*. (*Rev.* xx. 4, 5.)

Whether this be literally true, or not, the sufferings of the eminently pious and virtuous, and of the intrepid in the cause of truth and religion, cannot be, comparatively speaking, of long continuance, and will be succeeded by ages of glory and happiness. Let the oppressor do his worst, there is a limit fixed by a superior power that he cannot pass. *The wrath of man shall be made to praise God, and the remainder of that wrath he will restrain.* (*Psalm* lxxvi. 10.) Under the government of this great and good Being all the afflictions to which we can be exposed in this world are, in fact, *light* and momentary; and if they be endured with patience, fortitude, and true piety, they will be the means of working out for us, as the apostle says, 2 *Cor.* iv. 17, "a far more exceeding, *even* an eternal weight of glory." They cannot extend beyond the term of the present life, which, as *James* (iv. 14) says, is but as "a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

Having this faith in the government of God, and the prophecies of scripture, let us continue "stedfast, *immoveable*, always abounding in the work of our Lord, *knowing* that *our* labour *shall not finally be* in vain in the Lord." [1 *Cor.* xv. 58.]

The present State of Europe compared with ancient Prophecies;

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT

THE GRAVEL-PIT MEETING, IN HACKNEY,

February 28, 1794,

BEING THE DAY APPOINTED FOR A GENERAL FAST;

WITH

A PREFACE,

CONTAINING THE

Reasons for the Author's leaving England.

B. Quo fugis? Expecta. Liceat condiscere causas
Dissidii. Tu nostra, puer, nisi fallor, amabas
Pascua.
P. Parce, Parens, damnare tuum.—Tibi lætior annis
Tunc animus fuerat. Nunc intractabilis, asper.

Petrarch on taking leave of his Patron, the Cardinal Colonna.

Nos patriæ fines, nos dulcia linquimus arva.

Virgil.

[London, 1794.]

PREFACE.

THIS *Discourse*, and those on the *Evidences of Divine Revelation*,* which will be published about the same time, being the last of my labours in this country, I hope my friends, and the public, will indulge me while I give the reasons of their *being* the last, in consequence of my having at length, after much hesitation, and now with reluctance, come to a resolution to leave this country.

After the Riots in Birmingham, it was the expectation, and evidently the wish of many persons, that I should immediately fly to *France*, or *America*. But I had no consci-

* See *supra*, pp. 190—362.

ousness of guilt to induce me to fly my country.* On the contrary, I came directly to London, and instantly, by means of my friend Mr. Russell, signified to the king's ministers, that I was there and ready, if they thought proper, to be interrogated on the subject of the Riot. But no notice was taken of the message.

Ill-treated as I thought I had been, not merely by the populace of Birmingham, for they were the mere tools of their superiors, but by the country in general, which evidently exulted in our sufferings, and afterwards by the representatives of the nation, who refused to inquire into the cause of them, I own I was not without deliberating upon the subject of emigration; and several flattering proposals were made me, especially from *France*, which was then at peace within itself, and with all the world; and I was at one time much inclined to go thither, on account of its nearness to England, the agreeableness of its climate, and my having many friends there.

But I likewise considered that, if I went thither, I should have no employment of the kind to which I had been accustomed; and the season of active life not being, according to the course of nature, quite over, I wished to make as much use of it as I could. I therefore determined to continue in England, exposed as I was not only to unbounded obloquy and insult, but to every kind of outrage; and after my invitation to succeed my friend Dr. Price, I had no hesitation about it. Accordingly I took up my residence where I now am, though so prevalent was the idea of my insecurity, that I was not able to take the house in my own name; and when a friend of mine took it in *his*, it was with much difficulty that, after some time, the landlord was prevailed upon to transfer the lease to me. He expressed his apprehensions, not only of the house that I occupied being demolished, but also a capital house in which he himself resides, at the distance of no less than twenty miles from London, whither he

* If, instead of flying from lawless violence, I had been flying from public justice, I could not have been pursued with more rancour, nor could my friends have been more anxious for my safety. One man, who happened to see me on horseback on one of the nights in which I escaped from Birmingham, expressed his regret that he had not taken me, expecting probably some considerable reward, when, as he said, it was so easy for him to have done it. My friends earnestly advised me to disguise myself as I was going to London: but all that was done in that way was taking a place for me in the mail coach, which I entered at Worcester, in another name than my own. However, the friend who had the courage to receive me in London had thought it necessary to provide a dress that should disguise me, and also a method of making my escape, in case the house should have been attacked on my account; and for some time my friends would not suffer me to appear in the streets. (*P.*)

supposed the Rioters would go next, merely for suffering me to live in a house of *his*.

But even this does not give such an idea of the danger that not only myself, but every person, and every thing that had the slightest connexion with me, was supposed to be in, as the following: The managers of one of the principal charities among the Dissenters applied to me to preach their annual sermon, and I had consented; but the treasurer, a man of fortune, who knew nothing more of me than my name, was so much alarmed at it, that he declared he could not sleep. I therefore, to his great relief, declined preaching at all.

When it was known that I was settled where I now am, several of my friends, who lived near me, were seriously advised to remove their papers, and other most valuable effects, to some place of greater safety in London. On the 14th of July, 1792, it was taken for granted by many of the neighbours, that my house was to come down, just as at Birmingham the year before. When the Hackney Association was formed, several servants in the neighbourhood actually removed their goods; and when there was some political meeting at the house of Mr. Breillat,* though about two miles from my house, a woman, whose daughter was servant in the house contiguous to mine, came to her mistress to entreat that she might be out of the way; and it was not without much difficulty that she was pacified, and prevailed upon to continue in the house, her mistress saying that she was as safe as herself.

On several other occasions the neighbourhood has been greatly alarmed on account of my being so near them. Nor was this without apparent reason. I could name a person, and to appearance a reputable tradesman, who, in the company of his friends, in the hearing of one of my late congregation at Birmingham, but without knowing him to be such, declared that, in case of any disturbance, they would immediately come to Hackney, evidently for the purpose of mischief. In this state of things, it is not to be wondered at, that of many servants who were recommended to me, and some that were actually hired, very few could, for a long time, be prevailed upon to live with me.

These facts not only shew how general was the idea of my particular insecurity in this country; but what is of much

* "A pumpmaker in Hackney Road." See *New An. Reg.* (Dec. 7. 1793), XIV. p. 48.

more consequence, and highly interesting to the country at large, an idea of the general disposition to rioting and violence that prevails in it, and that the Dissenters are the objects of it. Mr. Pitt very justly observed, in his speech on the subject of the Riots in Birmingham,* that it was "the effervescence of the public mind." Indeed the effervescible matter has existed in this country ever since the civil wars in the time of Charles I., and it was particularly apparent in the reign of Queen Anne. But the power of government under the former princes of the *House of Hanover*, prevented its doing any mischief. The late events shew that this power is no longer exerted as it used to be, but that, on the contrary, there prevails an idea, well or ill-founded, that tumultuary proceedings against Dissenters will not receive any effectual discouragement. After what has taken place with respect to Birmingham, all idea of much hazard for insulting and abusing the *Dissenters* is entirely vanished; whereas the disposition to injure the *Catholics* was effectually checked by the proceedings of the year 1780. From that time *they* have been safe, and I rejoice in it. But from the year 1791, the Dissenters have been more exposed to insult and outrage than ever.

Having fixed myself at Clapton, unhinged as I had been, and having lost the labour of several years, yet flattering myself that I should end my days here, I took a long lease of my house, and expended a considerable sum in improving it. I also determined, with the assistance of my friends, to resume my philosophical and other pursuits; and after an interruption amounting to about two years, it was with a pleasure that I cannot describe, that I entered my new laboratory, and began the most common preparatory processes, with a view to some original inquiries. With what success I have laboured, the public has already in some measure seen, and may see more hereafter.

But though I did not choose (notwithstanding I found myself exposed to continual insult) to leave my native country, I found it necessary to provide for my sons elsewhere. My eldest son was settled in a business, which promised to be very advantageous, at Manchester; but his partner, though a man of liberality himself, informed him,

* May 21, 1792, when the late public-spirited, and justly-lamented Mr. Whitbread, brought abundant proof before the *Commons*, that "the magistrates had been negligent of their duty on that occasion." Mr. Whitbread's motion "to inquire into the conduct of the magistrates," was negatived, as might have been expected, "by a large majority." See *New An. Reg.* XIII. pp. 75, 76.

on perceiving the general prevalence of the spirit which produced the Riots in Birmingham, that, owing to his relationship to *me*, he was under the necessity of proposing a separation, which accordingly took place.

On this he had an invitation to join another connexion, in a business in which the spirit of party could not have much affected him; but he declined it. And after he had been present at the assizes at Warwick,* he conceived such an idea of this country, that I do not believe that any proposal, however advantageous, would have induced him to continue in it; so much was he affected on perceiving his father treated as I had been.

Determining to go to *America*, where he had no prospect but that of being a farmer, he wished to spend a short time with a person who has greatly distinguished himself in that way, and one who, from his own general principles, and his friendship for myself, would have given him the best advice and assistance in his power. He, however, declined it, and acknowledged some time after, that had it been known, as it must have been to his landlord, that he had a son of *mine* with him, he feared he should have been turned out of his farm.

My second son, who was present both at the Riot and the assizes, felt more indignation still, and willingly listened to a proposal to settle in France; and there his reception was but too flattering. However, on the breaking out of the war with this country, all mercantile prospects being suspended, he wished to go to America. There his eldest and youngest brother† have joined him, and they are now looking out for a settlement, having as yet no fixed views.

The necessity I was under of sending my sons out of this country, was my principal inducement to send the little property that I had, out of it too; so that I had nothing in England besides my library, apparatus, and household goods. By this I felt myself greatly relieved, it being of little consequence where a man, already turned sixty, ends his days. Whatever good or evil I have been capable of, is now chiefly done; and I trust that the same consciousness of

* April 5, 1792, when "the jury returned their verdict for £2502 18*s.*" though Dr. Priestley's well-supported claim amounted to £4122 11*s.* 9*d.* See *New An. Reg.* XIII. p. 14; *infra*, p. 528; Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 205.

† Henry, at his request, named after Lord Shelburn, "of whom, being much younger than any of his other children, and having entertained the hopes of his succeeding him in his *Theological* and *Philosophical* pursuits, he was remarkably fond." This promising youth died at *Northumberland*, in 1795. See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 134; Mr. Priestley's *Continuation*, 1806, pp. 191, 192; *Mon. Repos*, I. p. 396.

integrity, which has supported me hitherto, will carry me through any thing that may yet be reserved for me. Seeing, however, no great prospect of doing much good, or having much enjoyment here, I am now preparing to follow my sons; hoping to be of some use to them in their present unsettled state, and that Providence may yet, advancing in years as I am, find me some sphere of usefulness along with them.

As to the great odium that I have incurred; the charge of *sedition*, or my being an enemy to the constitution or peace of my country, is a mere pretence for it, though it has been so much urged, that it is now generally believed, and all attempts to undeceive the public with respect to it, avail nothing at all. The whole course of my studies from early life, shews how little *politics* of any kind have been my object. Indeed, to have written so much as I have in *theology*, and to have done so much in *experimental philosophy*, and at the same time to have my mind occupied, as it is supposed to have been, with factious politics, I must have had faculties more than human. Let any person only cast his eye over the long list of my publications, and he will see that they relate almost wholly to theology, philosophy, or general literature.

I did, however, when I was a younger man, and before it was in my power to give much attention to philosophical pursuits, write a small anonymous political pamphlet, on *The State of Liberty in this Country*,* about the time of Mr. Wilkes's election for Middlesex, which gained me the acquaintance, and I may say the friendship of Sir George Savile, and which I had the happiness to enjoy as long as he lived.†

At the request also of Dr. Franklin and Dr. Fothergill, I wrote an Address to the Dissenters, on the subject of the approaching rupture with America,‡ a pamphlet which Sir George Savile, and my other friends, circulated in great numbers, and, it was thought, with some effect.

After this, I entirely ceased to write any thing on the subject of politics, except as far as the business of *the Test Act*, and of *Civil Establishments of Religion*, had a connexion with politics. And though, at the recommenda-

* "Present State of Liberty in Great Britain and the Colonies." 1769.

† Sir George Savile, M. P. for Yorkshire, died in 1784, aged 59.

‡ "An Address to Protestant Dissenters of all Denominations, on the approaching Election of Members of Parliament, with respect to the State of Public Liberty in general, and of American Affairs in particular." 1774.

tion of Dr. Price, I was presently after this taken into the family of the Marquis of Lansdowne, and I entered into almost all his views, as thinking them just and liberal, I never wrote a single pamphlet, or even a paragraph in a newspaper, all the time that I was with him, which was seven years.

I never preached a political sermon in my life, unless such as, I believe, all Dissenters usually preach on the Fifth of November, in favour of *civil and religious liberty*, may be said to be political. And on these occasions, I am confident that I never advanced any sentiment but such as, till of late years, would have tended to recommend, rather than render me obnoxious to those who direct the administration of this country. And the doctrines which I adopted when young, and which were even popular then, (except with the clergy, who were at that time generally disaffected to the family on the throne,) I cannot abandon, merely because the times are so changed that they are now become unpopular, and the expression and communication of them hazardous.

Farther, though I by no means disapprove of societies for political information, such as are now every where discountenanced, and generally suppressed, I never was a member of any of them; nor, indeed, did I ever attend any public meeting, if I could decently avoid it, owing to habits acquired in studious and retired life.

From a mistake of my talents and disposition, I was invited by many of the departments in *France*, to represent them in the present *National Convention*, after I had been made a citizen of France, on account of my being considered as one who had been persecuted for my attachment to the cause of liberty here. But though the invitation was repeated with the most flattering importunity, I never hesitated about declining it.*

* See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 203, and a *Note* in the *Appeal*, Pt. ii. From "Procès-Verbal de la Convention Nationale; imprimé par son ordre," I quote the following passage, which forms part of the *Minutes* of 28 *Septembre*, 1792, *l'an premier de la République Française:*

"On fait lecture d'une lettre adressée par le Docteur *Priestley*, Citoyen François, à la Convention Nationale, et datée de *Hackney*, le 13 Septembre, dans laquelle ce Citoyen remercie la précédente Assemblée législative de l'honneur qu'elle lui a fait en lui conférant le titre de Citoyen François, par laquelle encore il remercie l'Assemblée électorale du département de l'*Orne*, de l'avoir élu Membre de la Convention. Le Citoyen Priestley exposé les raisons qui le déterminent à refuser la place de Député, et demande à l'Assemblée la permission de lui communiquer ses observations sur les matières qu'elle va traiter. On lit une autre lettre du Docteur Priestley au Ministre *Roland*.

"La Convention décrète l'impression de la lettre de Priestley à la Convention,

I can farther say with respect to politics, concerning which I believe every Englishman has some opinion or other, (and at present, owing to the peculiar nature of the present war, it is almost the only topic of general conversation,) that, except in company, I hardly ever think of the subject, my reading, meditation, and writing, being almost wholly engrossed by theology and philosophy; and of late, as for many years before the Riots in Birmingham, I have spent a very great proportion of my time, as my friends well know, in my laboratory.

If, then, my real crime has not been *sedition* or *treason*, what has it been? For every *effect* must have some adequate *cause*, and, therefore, the odium that I have incurred must have been owing to something in my declared sentiments or conduct that has exposed me to it. In my own opinion, it cannot have been any thing but my open hostility to the doctrines of the Established Church, and more especially to all civil establishments of religion whatever. This has brought upon me the implacable resentment of the great body of the clergy; and they have found other methods of opposing me, besides *argument*, and that use of the *press* which is equally open to us all. They have also found an able ally and champion in Mr. Burke, who (without any provocation, except that of answering his book on the French Revolution*) has taken several opportunities of inveighing against me, in a place where he knows I cannot reply to him, and from which he also knows that his accusation will reach every corner of the country, and, consequently, thousands of persons who will never read any writings of mine.† They have had another,

et autorise son President [*Pétion*] à répondre à ce Citoyen." *Procès-Verbal*, 1792, *à Paris*, I. p. 93.

"September 28, Dr. Priestley addressed two Letters, one to the Convention, the other to M. *Roland*, expressive of the great honours conferred on him; first, by the nation at large adopting him a citizen of France, and next, by the department of *Orne* electing him a member of the Legislative Body. These Letters were much applauded, and ordered to be inscribed in the *Procès-Verbal;* and in answer to his Letter, addressed to the Assembly, the president was charged to inform him, that the Convention would receive with pleasure any reflections which he might be pleased to transmit to them." *Chronologist of the War*, 1797, p. 69.

The Department of *Orne* included parts of *Normandy* and *Perche*. The Capital was *Alençon*.

* In XIII. *Letters*, 1791, which will appear in the *Miscellaneous* Works.

† Mr. Burke having said in the House of Commons, that "I was made a citizen of France, on account of my declared hostility to the constitution of this country," I, in the public papers, denied the charge, and called upon him for the proofs of it. As he made no reply, in the Preface to my Fast Sermon of the last year, I said, "It now sufficiently appears, that he has neither ability to maintain his charge,

and still more effectual vehicle of their abuse, in what are called *the treasury newspapers*, and other popular publications.

By these and other means, the same party spirit which was the cause of the Riots in Birmingham, has been increasing ever since, especially in that neighbourhood; a remarkable instance of which may be seen in a *Letter*, addressed, but not sent to me, from *Mr. Foley*, *Rector of Stourbridge*, who acknowledges the satisfaction that he and his brethren have received from one of the grossest and coarsest pieces of abuse of me that has yet appeared, which, as a curious specimen of the kind, I inserted in the *Appendix of my Appeal*, and in which I am represented as no better than *Guy Fawkes*, or the devil himself. This very Christian divine recommends to the members of the Established Church to decline all commercial dealings with Dissenters, as an effectual method of exterminating them. Defoe's *Shortest Way with the Dissenters** would have taught him a more effectual method still. And yet this Mr. Foley, whom I never saw, and who could not have had any particular cause of enmity to me, had, like Mr. Madan of Birmingham, a character for liberality. What, then, have we to expect from others, when we find so much bigotry and rancour in such men as these?

Many times, by the encouragement of persons from whom better things might have been expected, I have been burned in effigy along with Mr. Paine; and numberless insulting and threatening letters have been sent to me from all parts of

nor virtue to retract it." A year more of silence on his part having now elapsed, this is become more evident than before. *(P.)* See *supra*, p. 497.

* A tract written in a grave, ironical style, advising to hang them all. *(P.)*

"If one severe law were made, and punctually executed, that whoever was found at a conventicle, should be banished the nation, and the preacher be hanged, we should soon see an end of the tale; they would all come to church, and one age would make us all one again. To talk of 5*s.* a month for not coming to the sacrament, and 1*s.* per week for not coming to church, this is such a way of converting people as never was known; this is selling them a liberty to transgress for so much money. If it be not a crime, why don't we give them full licence? And if it be, no price ought to compound for the committing it, for that is selling a liberty to people to sin against God and the government.

"We hang men for trifles, and banish them for things not worth naming; but an offence against God and the Church, against the welfare of the world, and the dignity of religion, shall be bought off for 5*s.* This is such a shame to a Christian government, that 'tis with regret I transmit it to posterity." Such was *Defoe's* ironical argument. See "Reflections upon a late scandalous and malicious Pamphlet, entitul'd 'The Shortest Way with the Dissenters,'" 4to. 1702, p. 9; *Biog. Brit.* V. pp. 54, 55. For this publication, *Defoe* suffered the punishment of the *Pillory*, on which he wrote his *Hymn to the Pillory*. See *ibid.* pp. 55, 56; Defoe's *Writings*, 1705, II. pp. 102—117.

the kingdom.* It is not possible for any man to have conducted himself more peaceably than I have done all the time that I have lived at Clapton; yet it has not exempted me, not only from the worst suspicions, but very gross insults. A very friendly and innocent club, which I found in the place, has been considered as *Jacobin*, chiefly on my account; and at one time there was cause of apprehension that I should have been brought into danger for lending one of Mr. Paine's books; but, with some difficulty, the neighbourhood was satisfied that I was innocent.

As nothing had been paid to me on account of damages in the Riot, when I published the second part of my *Appeal to the Public* on the subject, it may be proper to say, that it was paid some time in the beginning of the year 1793, with interest only from the first of January of the same year, though the injury was received in July, 1791, when equity evidently required that it ought to have been allowed from the time of the Riot, especially as, in all the cases, the allowance was far short of the loss. In my case it fell short, as I have shewn, not less than two thousand pounds; and the losses sustained by the other sufferers far exceeded mine. Public justice also required that, if the forms of law, local enmity, or any other cause, had prevented our receiving full indemnification, it should have been made up to us from the public treasury; the great end of all civil government being protection from violence, or an indemnification for it. Whatever we might in equity claim, the country owes us, and if it be just, will, some time or other, pay, and with interest.

I would farther observe, that since, in a variety of cases, money is allowed where the injury is not of a pecuniary nature, merely because no other compensation can be given,

* In one of these, I was threatened with being burned alive, before a slow fire. (*P.*) *Note* in Mr. Priestley's *Continuation*, p. 154.

Dr. Carpenter has obligingly procured for me, from the kind attention of Dr. Estlin's widow, several letters, written to him, by Dr. Priestley. Accompanying these, I find a letter without a date, but with the post-mark, *Bath*. It must have been sent to Dr. Priestley while on a visit at Bristol. The following is an *exact* copy, and sufficiently discovers the spirit of that time:

"Dr. Priestly at Mr. Histlings Mile hill *near The Gallus* Bristol.

"The Letter attempting to Justify your conduct is a Dam'd Hipocritical business.

"You are the Fire Brand that produced the Conflagaration. A Wretch that denies his Saviour as Divinity and who wo^d. Whet the Ax for decapetation ought to be Blasted here & Stound to Death.

"A beleiver in Christ."

the same should have been done with respect to me, on account of the destruction of my manuscripts, the interruption of my pursuits, the loss of a pleasing and advantageous situation, &c. &c.; and had the injury been sustained by a *clergyman*, he would, I doubt not, have claimed and been allowed very large damages on this account. So far, however, was there any idea of the kind in *my* favour, that my counsel advised me to make no mention of my manuscript *Lectures on the Constitution and Laws of England*, a work about as large as that of Blackstone, (as may be seen by the *Syllabus* of the particular lectures, sixty-three in all, published in the first edition,)* of my *Essay on a Course of Liberal Education for Civil and Active Life*, because it would be taken for granted that they were of a seditious nature, and would, therefore, have been of disservice to me with the jury. Accordingly they were, in the account of my losses, included in the article of so much *paper*. After these losses, had I had nothing but the justice of my country to look to, I must have sunk under the burden, incapable of any farther exertions.† It was the seasonable generosity of my friends that prevented this, and put it in my power, though with the unavoidable loss of near two years, to resume my former pursuits.

A farther proof of the excessive bigotry of this country is, that, though the clergy of Birmingham, resenting what I advanced in the First Part of my *Appeal*, [1792,] replied to it, and pledged themselves to go through with the inquiry along with me, till the whole truth should be investigated, they have made no reply to the *Second Part* of my *Appeal*, [1792,] in which I brought specific charges against themselves, and other persons by name, proving them to have been the promoters and abettors of the Riot; and yet they have as much respect shewn to them as ever, and the country at large pays no attention to it. Had the clergy been the injured persons, and Dissenters the Rioters, unable to answer the charges brought against them, so great would have been the general indignation at their conduct, that, I am persuaded, it would not have been possible for them to continue in the country.

I could, if I were so disposed, give my readers many more instances of the bigotry of the clergy of the Church of Eng-

* 1765. The *Syllabus* will appear among the *Miscellaneous* Works.
† See *supra*, pp. 522, 523, *Note* *.

land with respect to me, which could not fail to excite, in generous minds, equal indignation and contempt; but I forbear.* Had I, however, foreseen what I am now witness to, I certainly should not have made any attempt to replace my library or apparatus, and I soon repented of having done it. But this being done, I was willing to make some use of both, before another interruption of my pursuits. I began to philosophize, and make experiments, rather late in life, being near forty, for want of the necessary means of doing any thing in this way; and my pursuits have been much interrupted by removals, (never, indeed, chosen by myself, but rendered necessary by circumstances,) and my time being now short, I hoped to have had no occasion for more than one, and that a final remove. But the circumstances above-mentioned have induced me, though with great and sincere regret, to undertake another, and to a greater distance than any that I have hitherto made.

I profess not to be unmoved by the aspect of things exhibited in this Discourse; but, notwithstanding this, I should willingly have awaited my fate in my native country, whatever it had been, if I had not had sons in America, and if I did not think that a field of public usefulness, which is evidently closing upon me here, might open to more advantage there.

I also own that I am not unaffected by such unexampled punishments as those of Mr. Muir and my friend Mr. Palmer, for offences which, if, in the eye of reason, they be any at all, are slight, and very insufficiently proved; a measure so subversive of that freedom of speaking and acting, which has hitherto been the great pride of Britons.† But the sentence of Mr. Winterbotham,‡ for delivering from the pulpit what, I am persuaded, he never did deliver,§ and

* At a dinner of all the *Prebendaries* of a cathedral church, the conversation turning on the Riots in Birmingham; and on a clergyman having said, that if I were mounted on a pile of my publications, he would set fire to them, and burn me alive, they all declared that they would be ready to do the same. *(P.)* *Note* in Mr. Priestley's *Continuation*, p. 158.

† See *New An. Reg.* XIV. pp. 129, 130, (31)—(35) (37)—(40) (47) (48).

‡ Nov. 26, 1793. "On two indictments, charging him with having preached two seditious sermons—for the first offence, to pay a fine of £100, and to be imprisoned two years—and for the second offence, to pay a further fine of £100, and to be imprisoned two years, from the expiration of the first." *New An. Reg.* XIV. p. 47. This imprisonment, for *four years*, Mr. W. endured in *Newgate*.

§ As, I think, every impartial person must have been persuaded, even from the Judge's *Report* of the trial, to which I listened in the Court of King's Bench, when Mr. Winterbotham was called up for judgment.

The leading counsel for the Crown, Serjeant *Rooke*, was distinguished, on this

which, similar evidence might have drawn upon myself, or any other Dissenting minister, who was an object of general dislike, has something in it still more alarming.* But, I trust, that conscious innocence would support me as it does him, under whatever prejudiced and violent men might do to me, as well as say of me. But I see no occasion to expose myself to danger without any prospect of doing good, or to continue any longer in a country in which I am so unjustly become the object of general dislike, and not retire to another, where I have reason to think I shall be better received. And, I trust, that the same good Providence which has attended me hitherto, and made me happy in my present situation, and all my former ones, will attend and bless me in what may still be before me. In all events, *The will of God be done.*

I cannot refrain from repeating again, that I leave my native country with real regret, never expecting to find any where else society so suited to my disposition and habits, such friends as I have here, (whose attachment has been more than a balance to all the abuse I have met with from

trial, by his virulent attempts to prejudice the Jury against the defendant. Like other *expectant* lawyers, he had, probably,

Weigh'd well the *wages*, with the *work* assign'd,

and, in due time, became a *puisne* Judge. *Sic iter ad astra.*

* I trust that the friends of liberty, especially among the Dissenters, will not fail to do every thing in their power to make Mr. Winterbotham's confinement, and also the sufferings of Mr. Palmer and his companions, as easy to them as possible. Having been assisted in a season of persecution myself, I should be very ill deserving of the favours I have received, if I was not particularly desirous of recommending such cases as theirs to general consideration. Here difference in religious sentiments is least of all to be attended to. On the contrary, let those who, in this respect, differ the most from Mr. Winterbotham, which is my own case, exert themselves the most in his favour. When men of unquestionable integrity and piety suffer in consequence of acting (as such persons always will do) from a principle of *conscience*, they must command the respect even of their enemies, if they also act from principle, though they be thereby led to proceed in an opposite direction.

The case of men of education and reflection, (and who act from the best intentions with respect to the community,) committing what only *state policy* requires to be considered as *crimes*, but which are allowed on all hands to imply no moral turpitude, so as to render them unfit for heaven and happiness hereafter, is not to be confounded with that of common felons. There was nothing in the conduct of Louis XIV. and his ministers, that appeared so shocking, so contrary to all ideas of justice, humanity, and decency, and that has contributed more to render their memory execrated, than sending such men as Mr. Marolles, and other eminent Protestants, who are now revered as saints and martyrs, to the galleys, along with the vilest miscreants. Compared with this, the punishment of death would be mercy. [See Vol. IX. p. 19; Vol. X. pp. 446—461.] I trust that, in time, the Scots in general will think these measures a disgrace to their country. *(P.)*

I have still great pleasure in recollecting, after so long an interval, the few attentions I had an opportunity of paying to Mr. Winterbotham, during the period of his very unjust restraint. For the exemplary conduct of Mr. Lindsey and Mrs. Rayner, towards that gentleman, and his affectionate acknowledgments of their kindness, see *Memoirs of Lindsey*, pp. 351—359, 522—525.

others,) and especially to replace one particular Christian friend, in whose absence I shall, for some time at least, find all the world a blank.* Still less can I expect to resume my favourite pursuits with any thing like the advantages I enjoy here. In leaving this country, I also abandon a source of maintenance, which I can but ill bear to lose. I can, however, truly say, that I leave it without any resentment or ill-will. On the contrary, I sincerely wish my countrymen all happiness; and when the time for reflection (which my absence may accelerate) shall come, my countrymen, I am confident, will do me more justice. They will be convinced, that every suspicion they have been led to entertain to my disadvantage, has been ill-founded, and that I have even some claims to their gratitude and esteem. In this case, I shall look with satisfaction to the time when, if my life be prolonged, I may visit my friends in this country; and perhaps I may, notwithstanding my removal for the present, find a grave (as I believe is naturally the wish of every man) in the land that gave me birth.

FAST SERMON.

MATT. iii. 2.

Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!

THIS was the great burden of the preaching of both *John the Baptist* and of our Saviour. But as that *kingdom of heaven*, the approach of which they announced, and which, by our Saviour's direction, is the subject of our daily prayers, is not yet come, but much nearer than it was in their time, there must be a greater propriety in urging this exhortation at present, than there has ever yet been. It is nothing but repentance that can prepare sinful men (and all men are, more or less, sinners) to derive any advantage from this kingdom, in which Christ and the saints shall bear rule; that new state of the heavens and of the earth, in which *righteousness* only *will dwell*. And being a second time called upon by our rulers, to humble ourselves before God, on account of the calamities we already feel, and those that we have reason to fear, and repentance being the only

* There can be no doubt that Dr. Priestley here designed Mr. Lindsey. See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 199.

means of averting his anger, and procuring a cessation or mitigation of his heavy judgments, I shall take this opportunity of urging it, from that very critical and truly alarming situation in which almost the whole of Europe now finds itself, and this country of ours, as having most at stake, perhaps more than any other.

If we can learn any thing concerning what is before us, from the language of prophecy, great calamities, such as the world has never yet experienced, will precede that happy state of things in which *the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and these calamities will chiefly affect those nations which have been the seat of the great antichristian power; or, as all Protestants, and I believe justly, suppose, have been subject to the See of *Rome*. And it appears to me highly probable, as I hinted in my last Discourse on this occasion,* that the present disturbances in Europe are the beginning of those very calamitous times. I therefore think there is a call for unusual seriousness and attention to the course of Divine Providence, that, when *the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants thereof may learn righteousness*, so as to be prepared for whatever events the now rapid wheels of time may disclose. Let us, then, my brethren, make a serious pause. Let us look back to the ancient prophecies, and compare them with the present state of things around us; and let us then look to ourselves, to our own sentiments and conduct, that we may feel and act as our peculiar circumstances require.

The future happy state of the world, when the Jews shall be restored to their own country, and be at the head of all the nations of the earth,† was first distinctly mentioned by *Isaiah*, and other prophets who were nearly contemporary with him; but it was first denominated *the kingdom of heaven*, and announced as to be administered by "the Son of Man," or *the Messiah* by *Daniel* [vii. 13]. It was, however, by other prophets, given to a descendant of *David*. All Christians consider *Jesus* as this descendant of David, or the promised *Messiah*. The mistake which the Jews were under, arose from their wholly overlooking the suffering state of the Messiah, and imagining that his *first* coming would be that mentioned by *Daniel*, "with the clouds of heaven;" and consequently that his kingdom would commence on his first appearance.

* See *supra*, p. 515. † See *supra*, pp. 289—297; Vol. XII. pp. 421—436.

Jesus, knowing himself to be the *Messiah*, never denied that, at a proper time, he would appear as a king; nor could there have been at that time any uncertainty about the meaning of the term *king*. When *Pilate* asked Jesus, [*John* xviii. 37,] if he was a king, he acknowledged it, and added that he was sent to bear witness to *that*, as well as to other truths; though, to obviate the jealousy of Pilate and the Roman government, he said that his *kingdom* was "not of this world;" so that it did not interfere with the governments which then existed in the world, being that *kingdom of heaven* which was to take place hereafter, and to be exercised upon maxims very different from those of the then existing kingdoms.

Jesus also said, [*Matt.* xix. 28,] that when he should reign, his apostles would reign with him, and that they should "sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." *Paul* also said, [1 *Cor.* vi. 2,] that "the saints shall judge the world." And it is remarkable that, in the original prophecy of *Daniel*, the administration of this *kingdom of heaven* is not said to be wholly confined to one person, but to be extended to many, *Dan.* vii. 18: "The saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever." *Ver.* 27: "And the kingdom, and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom, under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him," or rather, obey *it*.

That this will be a proper *kingdom*, though a kingdom of righteousness, the object of which will be the happiness of the subjects of it, is farther evident from the other kingdoms which are to be overthrown in order to make way for it. For had it been that purely *spiritual kingdom* which some suppose, what occasion was there for the destruction of the other kingdoms; since they would not have interfered with it, but might have subsisted at the same time?

In the first vision of *Nebuchadnezzar*, interpreted by *Daniel*, (ii. 34, 35,) this future kingdom of heaven is represented by "a *little* stone, cut out of a *mountain*, without hands, which *smote* the image" representing the preceding kingdoms, and "brake *it* to pieces," when itself "became a great mountain, *filling* the whole earth." In the interpretation of this vision, *ver.* 44, it is said, "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never

be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces, and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever;" evidently in the place of the other kingdoms. It is, therefore, an institution adapted to answer the purpose of them, but in a much better manner.

This kingdom, however, a kingdom of truth and righteousness, will not be established without the greatest convulsions, and the violent overthrow of other kingdoms. Every description, figurative or otherwise, of this great revolution, clearly implies violence, and consequently great calamity. The little stone *smiting* the image, and *breaking it in pieces*, is far from giving an idea of a peaceable revolution, but one that will be effected with great violence, and in a short time. The following language, [*Dan.* ii. 35,] is peculiarly emphatical: "Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold," (all the materials of which the image consisted,) "broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors, and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." In the interpretation it is said, *ver.* 44, that this new kingdom "shall break in pieces, and consume all *the other* kingdoms."

The same awful conclusion may be drawn from the language used in the corresponding vision of *Daniel* himself, "in the first year of *Belshazzar*," in which the four great empires, which in *Nebuchadnezzar's* dream, [*Dan.* ii. 32, 33,] had been represented by the *four metals* of which the image that he saw, consisted, are represented [*Dan.* vii. 3] by "*four* great *beasts*," and the last of them is said, (*ver.* 11,) not to die a natural death, but *to be slain*, and moreover, his *body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.*" As in the former vision, the ten kingdoms, into which the last, or the *Roman* empire was to be divided, were represented by the ten toes of the image; in this vision of *Daniel*, (vii. 7,) they are represented by the "ten horns" of the last beast. These are said to be ten kingdoms, or thrones, and these thrones are said to be *cast down*," (*ver.* 9,) clearly implying violence in their dissolution.

In the language of prophecy, great, and especially sudden revolutions in kingdoms and states, are frequently represented by *earthquakes;* and also the supreme powers on earth, by the sun, moon, and stars. And, in agreement

with the preceding view suggested by *Daniel*, the prophet *Haggai*, who wrote after him, to comfort his countrymen in their low and distressed circumstances, and gloomy prospects, when they were erecting a poor and contemptible temple, compared with that of *Solomon*, assures them, that the glory of *the latter house*, meaning, I am persuaded, not the house they were then building, for that was taken down by *Herod*, nor yet that of Herod, but the *last* house, the glorious temple described by *Ezekiel*, as to be built after the return of the Jews to their own country, should be greater than that of the former house built by Solomon. *Haggai* describes the great revolution that is to precede it in the following manner:

> For thus saith Jehovah God of hosts:
> Yet once more, in a short time,
> I will shake the heavens and the earth,
> And the sea, and the dry land;
> And I will shake all the nations;
> And the desire of all the nations shall come;
> And I will fill this house with glory;
> Saith Jehovah God of hosts.
> Greater shall be the glory
> Of this latter House than of the former,
> Saith Jehovah God of hosts:
> And in this place will I give peace,
> Saith Jehovah God of hosts.*

What can be this *peace*, but the future peaceful and happy state of the world, under the *Messiah?* And what can be this *shaking of the nations*, that is to precede it, but great convulsions, and sudden revolutions, such as we see now beginning to take place?

The last great power that is foretold, as to arise among the ten kingdoms into which the Roman empire is to be divided, is represented by the *little horn*, which is said to arise after the ten, signifying, I doubt not, the *Papal* power. It is said, *Dan.* vii. 20—22, to have "eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows';" which "made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High, and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." This power, in the interpretation of the vision, is said, [*ver.* 25,] to be one that

* *Haggai* ii. 6, 7, 9, *Newcome.* See Vol. XII. pp. 388, 389.

should "speak great words against the Most High, and wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws." It is added, "they shall be given into his hand, until a time, and times, and the dividing of time," the very period for the duration of the great antichristian power in the *Revelation*.*

When the termination of this last power is described, it it said, *ver.* 26, "The judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end," which clearly implies nothing of a peaceable nature, but something exceedingly violent and calamitous.

This is, no doubt, the same awful period that is spoken of in the last chapter of *Daniel* (xii. 1, 2): "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people, and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." For, that the resurrection, at least in part, will take place at the commencement of this great period, is agreeable to the uniform language of Scripture on the subject.

All the prophecies in the *New Testament* concerning the fall of *Antichrist*, and the commencement of the proper kingdom of heaven, and of Christ, exactly correspond with those which I have quoted from the *Old Testament*. The second coming of Christ is represented by the apostle Paul, 2 *Thess.* i. 7, 8, as an event exceedingly awful, and dreadful to the wicked. He will "be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God."

That the great antichristian power is to be destroyed at this second coming of Christ, and not properly before, and therefore that its final destruction will be sudden, is evident from what the same apostle says afterwards, 2 *Thess.* ii. 8—10: "Then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming; even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, in them that perish;" characters sufficiently evident of the Church of *Rome*.

* See *Ch.* xii. 14, Vol. XIV. p. 473.

The account that is given, in the Book of *Revelation*, (xi. 15,) of the commencement of the last great period, signified by the blowing of the *seventh trumpet*, when *the kingdoms of the earth* are to become *the kingdoms of our Lord Jesus Christ*, is immediately preceded by *the third*, and probably far the greatest of the *three woes*, the first of which was occasioned by the conquests of the *Saracens*, and the second by those of the *Turks*, as the order of the events described under the preceding trumpets evidently implies. And the state of things at this time is described in the following emphatical language of the four and twenty elders, who are said, on this occasion, to fall on their faces, and to worship God, *Rev.* xi. 17: "We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, *who* art, and wast, and art to come, because thou hast taken to thee thy great power and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they *must* be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants, the prophets,—and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth."*

We have here a wonderful concurrence of great events, and among these is *the anger of the nations*, followed by *the destruction of them that have destroyed the earth.* Now how has the earth been destroyed by the men who *have* destroyed it, but by desolating wars, and the destruction that has thereby been made of mankind? In like manner, then, may we conclude that those destructive powers will themselves be destroyed, probably by one another, in those *wars* which the apostle *James* [iv. 1] says arise from *men's lusts*, the lust of ambition and revenge. And when, my brethren, have we seen, or heard of, such anger and rage in nations, such violence in carrying on war, and such destruction of men, as at this very time? It is thought that the last campaign only has destroyed many more men than all the eight years of the *American* war, and probably more than the long war before it; and from the increased armaments of the belligerent powers, and their increasing animosity, it is probable that the approaching campaign will be more bloody than the last.

What has more eminently contributed to destroy the earth than the antichristian and idolatrous ecclesiastical establishments of Christianity that have subsisted in these western

* On this subject I refer my readers to two sermons lately published by the Rev. Elhanan Winchester, entitled *The Three Woe Trumpets*, deserving the serious consideration of all Christians, who are attentive to *the signs of the times.* *(P.)* See Vol. XIV. pp. 471, 472.

parts of the world; many more persons having been destroyed by *Christians*, as they have called themselves, than by *Heathens?* And do we not see one, and one of the principal, of those establishments, already and completely, destroyed?

A more highly wrought picture of the destruction and slaughter of men, that will precede this glorious period in which "*God will take to himself his great power and reign*," we find in *Rev.* xix. 1, 2, which describes the triumph of the saints on the occasion: "After these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia, salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God; for true and righteous are his judgments. For he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand." That this has a connexion with the second coming of Christ, appears from what immediately follows, *vers.* 11—16: "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called faithful and true, and in righteousness he *shall* judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written that no man knew but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and his name is called the Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean; and out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture, and on his thigh, a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."

That there will be literally great slaughter of men on the occasion, is clearly indicated in what follows, figurative and hyperbolical as the language is, *vers.* 17, 18: "And I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together, unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great."*

The same is evident from the account of the pouring out

* See Vol. XIV. p. 499.

of the third vial, *Rev.* xvi. 4—6: "And the third angel poured out his vial on the rivers and fountains of waters, and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, who art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy."*

That this great slaughter will be made on the destruction of the antichristian power, called in this book *the beast*, supported by *the kings of the earth*, is evident from *Rev.* xix. 19—21: "And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together, to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These were both cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth, and all the fowls were filled with their flesh."†

After this follows the description of the *millennium* (*Rev.* xx. 4—6): "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection. On such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God, and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years."‡

To me it appears not improbable, that several circumstances in our Saviour's prophecy concerning the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the desolation of *Judea*, relate to this great and more distant period. For it was delivered in answer to a question put to him by his disciples, which respected both the events, on the idea of their being coincident. "Tell us," say they, *Matt.* xxiv. 3, "when shall

* See Vol. XIV. p. 484. † *Ibid.* pp. 499, 500.
‡ See *ibid.* pp. 501—506.

these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age?" In answer to this, he says, first, as it is in *Luke*, (xxi. 9—12,) whose account in this case seems to be the most orderly and distinct of any, "But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified; for these things must first come to pass, but the end is not by and by. Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences, and fearful sights, and great signs shall there be from heaven. But before all these they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake."

I am the more inclined to think that some things in this prediction have this farther reference, because in them Jesus expressly quotes the language of *Daniel* recited above, which unquestionably has this reference; as when he says, *Matt.* xxiv. 21, 22, "There shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be: And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened."

It seems still more evident that this prediction admits of this interpretation, from what follows, which exactly corresponds to the more ancient prophecies. *Matt.* xxiv. 29: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, shall the sun be darkened, and the moon not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken;" which are almost the very words of the prophet *Haggai* quoted above. "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn. And they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect, from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." [*Vers.* 30, 31.]

That this great tribulation was a distant event, and did not respect the *Jews*, but the *Gentiles*, is probable from Jesus calling it, *Luke* xxi. 25, the "distress of nations," or *the nations*, that is, *the Gentiles;* "men's hearts," he subjoins, [*ver.* 26,] "failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. For the powers of heaven shall be shaken," that is, there will be great con-

vulsions, and violent revolutions, in kingdoms and states; "And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in *clouds*, with power and great glory." [*Ver.* 27.]

That this tribulation is coincident with that which is to precede the restoration of the Jews, is probable from his saying immediately before, *Luke* xxi. 24, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled," that is, till it shall come to be their turn to be punished; the destruction of the *Gentiles*, who had oppressed the *Jews*, commencing with the restoration of that highly-favoured nation.

Jesus farther says, *Luke* xxi. 22, "These be the days of vengeance, that all the things which are written may be fulfilled." Now the only days of vengeance particularly announced by the ancient prophets, to which Jesus here alludes, relate to the judgments of God upon the Gentiles who had shewn enmity to the Jews, and especially in their opposition to their re-settlement in their own country.

There is nothing more clear in the whole compass of prophecy, as I have shewn on another occasion,* than that after the destined period for the dispersion and calamities of the Jews, the heaviest of all the Divine judgments will fall upon those nations by whom they shall have been oppressed; and this will involve almost all the nations of the world, but more especially those of these western parts, which have been subject first to the *Roman* empire, and then to the see of *Rome*.

Moses says, *Deut.* xxx. 7, "The Lord thy God will put all these curses" (those which were threatened to fall upon them) "upon thine enemies, and upon them that hate thee, and persecute thee."

> For with those that contend with thee, I will contend;
> And thy children I will deliver.
> And I will gorge thine oppressors with their own flesh;
> And with their own blood, as with new wine, will I drench them.
> And all flesh shall know,
> That I Jehovah am thy saviour;
> And that thy redeemer is the Mighty One of Jacob.†

Zeph. iii. 19: "Behold at that time I will undo all that afflict thee."

> When I shall make a full end of all the nations
> Whither I have dispersed thee,

* See *supra*, pp. 297, 298.

† *Isa.* xlix. 25, 26, Bp. *Lowth*.

Yet will I not make a full end of thee:
But I will correct thee in moderation.*

Ezekiel, (xxviii. 26,) speaking of the happy times that will take place on the restoration of the Jews, says, "Yea, they shall dwell with confidence, when I have executed judgments upon all those that despise them round about them, and they shall know that I am *Jehovah* their God." Lastly, *Zechariah*, (xii. 9,) says, "It shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem."

That there is to be a day of visitation for all the nations in this part of the world, (all of whom have distinguished themselves so by their oppression and massacre of the Jews,)† will now, I presume, be sufficiently apparent, if there be any truth in prophecy. You will therefore naturally ask, if there be any ground for thinking that those judgments are now about to take place; if so, how long they will probably continue, and when will be the commencement of the glorious and happy times that are to follow.

That those great troubles, so frequently mentioned in the ancient prophecies, are now commencing, I do own I strongly suspect, as I intimated the last time that I addressed you on this occasion;‡ and the events of the last year have contributed to strengthen that suspicion; the storm, however, may still blow over for the present, and the great scene of calamity be reserved for some future time, though I cannot think it will be deferred long.

As to the precise time when the scene of calamity will terminate, and the proper kingdom of Christ will commence, he himself did not know, either before his death and resurrection, or afterwards. When he was questioned on the subject, he expressly said, *Mark* xiii. 32, "But of that day, and that hour, knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." When, after his resurrection, the disciples asked him, saying, *Acts* i. 6, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" he replied, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power."§ It is enough for us to know the certainty of these great events, that our faith may not fail on the approach of the predicted calamity, confident that it will have the happiest issue in Gods's own time. For the same Being who

* *Jer.* xxx. 11, *Blayney.*
† See *supra*, p. 297, 298.
‡ See *supra*, pp. 513—515.
§ See Vol. XIII. pp. 297, 389.

foretold the evil which we shall see come to pass, has likewise foretold the good that is to follow it.

That the second coming of Christ will be coincident with the commencement of the *millenium*, or the future peaceable and happy state of the world, (which, according to all the prophecies, will take place after the restoration of the Jews,) is evident from what *Peter* said, in his address to the Jews, on the occasion of his healing the lame man at the gate of the Temple, *Acts* iii. 19—21: "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. And he shall send Jesus Christ, who before was preached unto you, whom the heaven must receive until the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."* Now nothing is more evident than that the only period that can be called the time of *restitution of all things*, or the *paradisiacal* and happy state of the world, foretold by the ancient prophets, will follow the restoration of the Jews to their own country. This, and nothing else, is the great burden of all ancient prophecy.

That this will be a joyful event to the Jewish nation, when they will be convinced, perhaps by his personal appearance among them, that he is their promised *Messiah*, actually coming in the clouds of heaven, appears from what our Saviour himself says, *Luke* xiii. 35: "Verily I say unto you, ye shall not see me until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord;"† the very cry at which the Scribes and Pharisees were so much offended in the children, when Jesus entered Jerusalem, *Matt.* xxi. 9. This very cry will then be that of the whole nation.

But though our Saviour could not fix the time of his second coming, or the commencement of his proper kingdom, he sufficiently forewarned his disciples of the signs of its approach, and of some circumstances that will immediately precede it, to which it certainly behoves us to be attentive.

Before this great event the gospel is to be preached to all the world, *Matt.* xxiv. 14: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached *through* all the world, for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." If by the whole world, we mean the *Roman* empire, this was accomplished before the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and therefore

* See Vol. XIII. p. 398. † See *ibid.* p. 206; Vol. XIV. p. 502.

may refer to that event. But it may have a farther reference. And now there is hardly any nation that has not had an opportunity of having the gospel preached to them; and the late wonderful extension of navigation, by which the whole of the habitable world has been explored by Christians, though this was by no means the object of the navigators, will, no doubt, be the means of carrying the knowledge of the gospel to a greater extent than ever;* and the troubles of Europe will greatly contribute to the same end. Times of trouble make men serious. With these serious impressions on their minds, many will fly to distant countries, and carry the knowledge of the gospel with them; and, it may be hoped, in greater purity, and consequently more worthy of their acceptance, than it has hitherto appeared to them.†

Another preceding event, and of a more definite kind, is the great prevalence of infidelity, *Luke* xvii. 8: "When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith in the earth?" Now the prevalence of infidelity, of late years, has been very remarkable in all countries in which *antichristian* hierarchies have been established. And certainly all civil establishments of Christianity, in which power is claimed to prescribe articles of faith, to make laws to bind the consciences of Christians, and to inflict temporal punishments for the violation of them, are properly antichristian. For, as Christians, we are commanded [*Matt.* xxiii. 8] to acknowledge no man *master upon earth*, since *one is our master, even Christ.*

Moreover, such absurd doctrines have been established by human authority, and such horrid punishments have been inflicted upon men for obeying the dictates of conscience, under all those hierarchies, Protestant ones not excepted, that the minds of men have revolted at them; and, shocked at such enormities, have thrown off the belief and profession of Christianity altogether. This was long ago the case in *Italy*, where the enormities of the court of *Rome* were the most conspicuous; and many of the cardinals, and some of the popes themselves, are well known to have been unbelievers.

That this has long been the case in *France*, is what no person acquainted with that country the last fifty years will deny. It is now become more generally known, because it has had a better opportunity of shewing itself. That, in similar circumstances, the same, or something approaching

* See Vol. XIII. p. 295. † See, on *Rev.* xiv. 6, Vol. XIV. p. 480.

to it, would not appear to be the case with *us*, is more than those who are acquainted with the state of things in this respect, will vouch for.

When I was myself in France in 1774,* I saw sufficient reason to believe, that hardly any person of eminence, in *church* or *state*, and especially in the least degree eminent in philosophy or literature (whose opinions in all countries are, sooner or later, adopted by others) were believers in Christianity; and no person will suppose that there has been any change in favour of Christianity in the last twenty years. A person, I believe now living, and one of the best-informed men in the country, assured me very gravely, that (paying me a compliment) I was the first person he had ever met with, of whose understanding he had any opinion, who pretended to believe Christianity. To this all the company assented. And not only were the philosophers and other leading men in France at that time unbelievers in Christianity, or Deists, but *Atheists*, denying the being of a God. Nay, *Voltaire* himself, who was then living, was considered by them as a weak-minded man, because, though an unbeliever in revelation, he believed in a God.

When I asked these gentlemen what it was that appeared to them so incredible in Christianity, that they rejected it without farther examination, (for they did not pretend to have employed much time on the subject,) they mentioned the doctrines of *Transubstantiation* and the *Trinity*, as things too palpably absurd to require any discussion. It is, without doubt, the civil establishment of such Christianity as this, at which the common sense of mankind will ever revolt, that makes so many unbelievers, of persons who will not take the trouble to read the Scriptures for themselves, or who have not sagacity or patience to see through the false glosses that have been so long put upon them. These systems, and the blindness and obstinacy in the governing powers, in rejecting every proposal of reforming the most palpable abuses, and the most manifest oppressions, make unbelievers much faster than all rational Christians can unmake them.

Nothing, however, can ever counteract the fatal influence of such corrupt Christianity, as is supported by these hierarchies, which are also intolerably expensive and oppressive, but the exhibition of rational Christianity, with its proper evidence, by Unitarian Christians. But these are yet so

* See *supra*, pp. 51, 366.

few, compared with the bulk of Christians, who are Trinitarians, that superficial observers, as unbelievers in general are, who judge by the great mass, pay but little regard to their representations.

Happily, this infidelity is, in its turn, destroying those *antichristian* establishments which gave birth to it; and when this great revolution shall be accomplished, genuine, unadulterated Christianity, meeting with less obstruction, will not fail to recommend and establish itself by its own evidence, and become the religion of the whole world. True Christianity stands in no need of the aid of civil power.

This was the idea of the great Sir Isaac Newton, as appears from the evidence of the excellent Mr. Whiston, in the following passage: "Sir Isaac Newton had a very sagacious conjecture, which he told Dr. Clarke, from whom I received it, that the overbearing tyranny and persecuting power of the *antichristian* party, which hath so long corrupted Christianity and enslaved the Christian world, must be put a stop to, and broken to pieces by the prevalence of infidelity, for some time, before primitive Christianity could be restored; which seems to be the very means that is now working in *Europe*, for the same good and great end of Providence. Possibly he might think that our Saviour's own words implied it: 'When the Son of Man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?' *Luke* xviii. 8. (See *Constitut. Apost.* vi. 18; vii. 32.) Or possibly he might think no other way so likely to do it in human affairs; it being, I acknowledge, too sadly evident, that there is not at present religion enough in *Christendom*, to put a stop to such antichristian tyranny and persecution, upon any genuine principles of Christianity."*

The concluding observation of Mr. Whiston appears to me to be very just. It seems probable that no Christians, not even the freest and boldest, would ever have done what was necessary to be done, to the overturning of these corrupt establishments of Christianity, that unbelievers have lately done in France.

This great event of the late revolution in *France* appears to me, and many others, to be not improbably the accomplishment of the following part of the *Revelation* (*Ch.* xi. 13): "And the same hour there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men" (or literally, *names of men*) "seven thousand, and

* *Essay on the Revelation*, Ed. 2, p. 321. *(P.)*

the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven."*

An earthquake, as I have observed, may signify a great convulsion and revolution in states; and as the *Papal* dominions were divided into ten parts, one of which, and one of the principal of them, was *France*, it is properly called *a tenth part of the city*, or of the mystical *Babylon*. And if by *names of men*, we understand their *titles*, such as those of the nobility, and other hereditary distinctions, all of which are now abolished, the accomplishment of the prediction will appear to be wonderfully exact. It is farther remarkable, that this passage immediately precedes what I have quoted before† concerning *the nations being angry*, and *the wrath of God being come*, for *the destruction of those who have destroyed the earth*.

It is farther remarkable, that the kings of *France* were those who gave the *Popes* their temporalities, and the rank they now hold among the princes of the world. And it is foretold, *Rev.* xvii. 13, 16, 17, that those kings who gave "their power and strength unto the beast;—these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put it in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdoms unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled."‡

May we not hence conclude it to be highly probable, that what has taken place in *France* will be done in other countries? But the total destruction of this great *antichristian* power seems to be reserved for the second coming of Christ in person, by the *brightness of whose appearance*, and not before, he is, according to the apostle Paul, [2 *Thess.* ii. 8,] to be completely *destroyed*. And with this view, as well as others, every Protestant Christian should say, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."§ In the mean time, let us attend to the solemn admonition in the *Revelation* (xviii. 4, 5): "I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities."‖

* See Vol. XIV. p. 471. † *Supra*, p. 538.

‡ See Vol. XIV. pp. 490, 491.

§ *Rev.* xxii. 20. See *Le Clerc*, Vol. XIV. p. 514, Note **.

‖ That the opinion here advanced, concerning the danger of the civil powers of Europe, in consequence of their connexion with *antichristian* ecclesiastical systems, has been long entertained by me, may appear from the following extract from my

As the second coming of Christ will be during the general prevalence of infidelity, so it will be sudden, and most unexpected. This is the language of our Saviour himself, *Matt.* xxiv. 37: "As the days of Noah were, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, unto the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not till the flood came and took them all away, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be." Luke xvii. 28: "Likewise, also as it was in the days of Lot. They did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded. But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, He rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be when the Son of Man is revealed." The apostle Paul also says, 1 *Thess.* v. 2, "Yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape."

But sudden and unexpected as the coming of Christ will be, it will be most conspicuous. Speaking of his return, he says, *Matt.* xxiv. 26, "If they shall say unto you, Behold he" (that is, the Messiah) "is in the desert, go not forth. Behold he is in the secret chambers, believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be." As the ascent of Jesus was conspicuous, and probably leisurely, so will be his descent. While the disciples were viewing him as he ascended, we read, *Acts* i. 10, "Two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Here is no figurative language, no ambiguous expression. Neither is there in what the apostle says concerning the resurrection of the virtuous dead, which will take place at the coming of

History of the Corruptions of Christianity [1782]: "It is nothing but the alliance of the kingdom of Christ with the kingdoms of this world (an alliance which our Lord himself expressly disclaimed) that supports the grossest corruptions of Christianity; and perhaps we must wait for the fall of the civil powers before this most unnatural alliance be broken. Calamitous, no doubt, will that time be. But what convulsion in the political world ought to be a subject of lamentation, if it be attended with so desirable an event? May the kingdom of God and of Christ (that which I conceive to be intended in the Lord's Prayer) truly and fully *come*, though all the kingdoms of the world be removed in order to make way for it." (*P.*) See Vol. V. p. 504; Vol. XIV. p. 494.

Christ, which, in the Revelation is called the first resurrection, 1 *Thess.* iv. 14: "If we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him. For this we say unto you, by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall have no advantage over those who are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive, and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Again he says, 1 *Cor.* xv. 51, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

The certainty of this great catastrophe should be a sufficient motive with all Christians, who, as such, entertain no doubt with respect to the fact, to keep it constantly in view, and to regulate their whole conduct with a view to it. But if we apprehend it to be in a stricter sense of the word really near, which, from the present aspect of things, I own I am inclined to think may be the case, our attention is drawn to it in a most forcible manner. Did we really expect to see this great event, viz. the coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, we should hardly think or speak of any thing else; and the present commotions in the political world, extraordinary as they certainly are, would appear as nothing in comparison with it. What would otherwise be great, would, with respect to this, seem exceedingly little and insignificant.

What then, my brethren, is the practical inference that we should draw from finding, or even suspecting ourselves to be in this situation, the kingdom of heaven being at hand, but to repent, and by a change of heart and of life to be prepared for it; that "when our Lord shall return, and take an account of his servants, we may be found of him without spot and blameless, and not be ashamed before him at his coming"? "Seing," as the apostle Peter says, "we look for these things, what manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?"

The aspect of things, it cannot be denied, is, in the highest degree, alarming, making life, and every thing in it, peculiarly uncertain. What could have been more unexpected than the events of any one of the last four years, at the be-

ginning of it? What a total revolution in the ideas and conduct of a whole nation! What a total subversion of principles! What reverses of fortune, and what a waste of life! In how bloody and eventful a war are we engaged! How inconsiderable in its beginning, how rapid and wide in its progress, and how dark with respect to its termination! At first, it resembled Elijah's cloud, appearing no bigger than a *man's hand;* but now it covers and darkens the whole European hemisphere!

Now, whatever we may think, as politicians, (and with us every man will have his own opinion, on a subject so interesting to us all,) I would, in this place, admonish you not to overlook the hand of God in the great scene that is now opening upon us. Nothing can ever come to pass without his appointment, or permission; and then, whatever be the views of men, we cannot doubt, but that his are always wise, righteous, and good. Let us, therefore, exercise faith in him, believing that though "clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are for ever the habitation of his throne." All those who appear on the theatre of public affairs, in the field, or the cabinet, both those whom we praise, and those whom we blame, are equally instruments in his hands, and execute all his pleasure. Let this reflection, then, in our cooler moments, (and I hope we shall endeavour, in all the tumult of affairs, to make these as many as possible,) lead us to look more to God, and less to man; and consequently, in all the troubles in which we may be involved, repose the most unshaken confidence in him, and thence "in patience possess our own souls," especially when it is evident that it is wholly out of our power to alter the course of events. If we be careful so to live as to be at all times prepared to die, what have we to fear, even though, as the Psalmist says, the "earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea"? Whatever turn the course of things may take, it cannot then be to our disadvantage. What, then, should hinder our contemplating the great scene that seems now to be opening upon us, awful as it is, with tranquillity, and even with satisfaction, from our firm persuasion, that its termination will be glorious and happy?

Lastly, the more there are who indulge these enlarged and just views, who cultivate a sense of piety to God, (which will always lead us to suppress resentment, and to promote good-will towards men,) the more favour, in the righteous administration of Providence, will be shewn to

the country in which they shall be found. God, we know, would have spared even Sodom, if so many as ten righteous men had been found in it; and our Saviour, alluding, as I am inclined to think, to these very times, which seem to be approaching, says, that "for the elect's sake they *will be shortened.*" For our own sakes, therefore, for the sake of our friends, of our country, and of every thing that is dear to us in it, let us attend to the admonition of my text, to "repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." It is *righteousness that exalteth a nation*, and *sin* only is *the reproach*, and will be the ruin, *of any people.**

The Use of Christianity, especially in difficult Times.

A SERMON,

DELIVERED AT

THE GRAVEL-PIT MEETING, IN HACKNEY,

MARCH 30, 1794,

BEING

The Author's Farewell Discourse to his Congregation.

SECOND EDITION.

[London, 1794.]

PREFACE.

HAVING been requested to publish this Sermon, I have annexed to it my Letter of Resignation, for the sake of introducing the answer of the Congregation,† and the Addresses that have been sent to me, on occasion of my leaving this country, from the two united congregations at Birmingham, from *the Unitarian Society*,‡ and from the young men and women who have attended my private lectures on the subject of Natural and Revealed Religion.§ I wish to express my gratitude for the affection that has

* For the extracts from "Dr. Hartley's Observations on Man," and from a "Sermon preached in the Chapel of Trinity College, Cambridge," both annexed to this *Fast Sermon*, in 1794, see the *Appendix*, No. II. pp. 575—581.

† See both in the *Appendix*, No. III. pp. 581—583.

‡ These two Addresses are now reserved to appear among the various Addresses from public bodies, in another place.

§ For this *Address*, see the *Appendix*, No. III. pp. 583, 584.

been shewn me, by perpetuating, as far as I can, the marks that I have received of it. These Addresses will also serve to shew that, though calumniated and execrated by many, this has been more than compensated by the warm attachment of others, which may encourage persons in similar situations, to persevere in what appears to them to be right, fearless of any consequences that may result from it. These Addresses contain some expressions that are too highly complimentary. But, as Dr. Franklin used to say, "undue praise may serve to balance undue censure."

It is painful, no doubt, to take leave, as I do in this Discourse, of such a congregation as that with which I have been so happily connected, and which promised increasing satisfaction. But such genuine marks of esteem and affection as I have received from the members of it, cannot be unattended with pleasure. No joy or sorrow in this life can be expected to be wholly unmixed. This is a world of trial and discipline; and we should be willing to take the painful, as well as the pleasurable ingredients in it. It will be happy if we be improved by them, and be thereby prepared for a state in which this kind of discipline will not be necessary; where there will be *no more pain*, and where *all tears will be wiped from our eyes.*

I also take this opportunity of expressing my satisfaction in the candid attention with which I have of late been heard by unusually crowded audiences, consisting chiefly of strangers; thinking it to be a symptom of abating prejudice, and of the prevalence of better information than has hitherto obtained. The time, I hope, is approaching when all delusion will vanish; when men and things will be seen in their true light; and the prevalence of truth will, no doubt, be attended with an increase of general happiness.

FAREWELL DISCOURSE.

ACTS XX. 32:

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them which are sanctified.

My Christian Brethren,

BEING now to resign my pastoral charge among you, my thoughts are naturally turned to the sentiments expressed

by the apostle Paul, when he was in a similar situation with respect to the church of Ephesus. I do not pretend to his zeal or activity; but my wishes for your best interests are sincere and ardent; and I cannot shew it better than by directing your attention to sentiments most interesting to us all as Christians, and most conducive to our common edification.

With Paul I commend you to the good providence of God; praying that he would direct you in all your ways, and especially that you may be led to a right knowledge of the gospel, that you may imbibe the genuine spirit, and practise the duties of it, as the only way to ensure your present and future happiness. In his own emphatical language in my text, "I commend you to God, and the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them which are sanctified." By securing the latter, you cannot entertain a doubt of your title to the former. For, as the same apostle observes, [*Rom.* viii. 28,] "All things work together for good to them that love God;" the great object of the dispensation of the gospel being to "purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." [*Titus* ii. 14.]

This is also the great object of all Christian churches. They consist of persons who form themselves into societies for the purpose of promoting their mutual edification; and with this view they provide themselves with such *ministers* or assistants (for such is the real meaning and nature of our office) as they deem best calculated to promote that end; giving them proper leisure for the study of the Scriptures, for storing their minds with such knowledge as will best qualify them to instruct others, and for the acquirement of every other accomplishment that can enable them to do it to the most advantage. An office and employment the most truly useful, and, therefore, honourable.

The great importance of this object of Christian societies is strongly expressed by the apostle in my text. It is nothing less than to *build up* the members of them, that is, in faith and holiness, to raise and improve their characters, in order "to give *them* an inheritance among them that are sanctified;" that is, to prepare them for future happiness. It is, as it were, to take men out of the world, to wean them from the low pursuits and gratifications of it, and to make them *citizens of heaven;* to raise the sons of men to the high character and honour of the *sons of God*, and make them heirs of a happy immortality. And is not every other object

low and mean, compared with this? Give it, then, that place in your regards to which it is entitled, and, amidst all the necessary cares of this life, never lose sight of your great destination for another. Suffer not your minds to be fascinated by any thing that this world can present to you; but, as the apostle exhorts, [*Col.* i. 10,] holding all other things in deservedly low estimation, *walk worthy of God, and be fruitful in every good word and work, to do his will.* "Seeing, then," as another apostle observes, [2 *Pet.* iii. 11,] "that all these things shall be dissolved," since all our connexions here must soon be broken, at least by death, and an infinitely more important state awaits us beyond the grave, "what manner of persons ought *we* to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?"

All the connexions we form here, the most endearing and important ones, are slight and transient. We may flatter ourselves that we are planning our destination for a long time to come, and make our arrangements accordingly, as I did when I was settled at Birmingham, and again with you; but unforeseen circumstances occur, and all our plans are deranged; new ones must be formed, and a great portion of life is often employed, and, in a manner, wasted in making new arrangements, which may prove to be as temporary, and to as little purpose.

But, my brethren, the gospel, the study and practice of which it has been my business to recommend to you, holds out to us an object as much more fixed and stable, as it is in itself of more value. Our habitations here are perishable, liable to be destroyed by lawless violence; but there are houses "not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." [2 *Cor.* v. 1.] *Here we have no continuing city*, no place of absolute security, where we can depend upon not being disturbed. But in heaven is *a rest for the people of God*, a place where *the wicked cease from troubling*, and where those who are weary with their unceasing persecution may depend upon being unmolested. Let us, then, when we are harassed and disturbed here, especially when we are exposed to disturbance, because we ourselves are disposed to be quiet, wishing to live at peace ourselves, and desirous of promoting a disposition to peace in others, look forwards to that peaceful and happy state, and cultivate a temper of mind most suited to it.

Permit me to add, that I flatter myself our approaching separation may furnish an additional motive for doing every

thing in our power to secure a happy meeting, and a more permanent connexion in a world of greater stability than this. On my part, I have thought the connexion a happy one, and was far from having any wish ever to change it on this side the grave; and such, I would hope, has been your disposition with respect to me. And what is it that makes heaven itself most desirable, but the society of such friends as we wish to live with here? This world, in its present state, would be sufficiently paradisiacal for men, if they were what they ought to be, and what they are capable of being; if they were as improved in all respects as we have reason to think they hereafter will be. If, then, our present separation be painful, let us be looking and preparing for a state in which no event so mutually disagreeable will occur.

Our present situation, and that of the *Dissenters* in general, calls in a particular manner for the exercise of Christian principles. The cause of the Dissenters may now be said to be, what Christianity itself originally was, and long continued to be, viz. a sect "every where spoken against." [*Acts* xxviii. 22.] We are exposed to insult and outrage, though not to open and avowed persecution, on this account. But this situation, though not to be desired by us, is most favourable to the cultivation of that temper of mind which is most eminently Christian, to the virtues of patience, fortitude, meekness, forgiveness of injuries, and heavenly-mindedness; virtues of the most exalted kind, contributing most to the dignity of human nature, but for which there is comparatively but little call or occasion, in a season of prosperity.

"Woe unto you," says our Saviour, [*Luke* vi. 26,] "when all men shall speak well of you." But, "blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." [*Matt.* v. 11.] Let us, in the first place, then, shew that the evil that is spoken of us is *falsely* spoken, that is, give reasonable evidence of it; for to satisfy the violently prejudiced is impossible, and not to be expected of any man. It is what our Saviour himself and the apostles were unequal to. But this being done, with respect to those who are at all candid, and who will hear reason, conscious integrity is abundantly sufficient to support a man under any calumny.

Moreover, conscious of our own integrity, we can look down upon our enemies, not with hatred or ill will, but with compassion, as beings in a depraved and imperfect state,

neither qualified to be happy themselves nor to communicate happiness to others.

All persons under the influence of malignant passions are necessarily, and by the invariable law of our natures, in an uneasy state. Their habitual feelings, even when gratified, are unpleasant. But the feelings of those who are merely exposed to the malignity of others, without feeling any thing of the kind themselves, are serene, and highly pleasurable; besides being attended with a consciousness of superiority of character, and of greater advances in intellectual improvement.

The man who obeys the first impulse of natural appetite, corporeal or mental, gives no proof of his being a rational agent; for brutes are governed by appetite. But the man who refrains from gratifying his appetite and natural desire, whether that of revenging himself upon his enemy, or any other, must do it by the help of *reason*. He must have some degree of comprehension of mind, which takes in distant objects: and this is the thing that manifests a superiority of character.

The man who can even defer his revenge, and merely restrain his passion, is superior to him who gives way to the first impulse of it. But he who can so far make allowance for the hatred of his enemies, as to feel compassion and good-will towards them, while he knows the ill-will they bear him, is infinitely superior. We are not moved to anger by the anger of a child. Neither, then, should we be by the anger and malignity of those grown persons whom, with respect to intellectual and moral improvement, we regard in no higher a light.

On account of the low rank of every sentiment bordering on anger and resentment, (requiring only particular impressions to excite them, and much reflection to suppress them,) such as zeal for any particular cause, even that of religion, it is easy to excite it, and lead men to act upon it with the greatest violence, so as to hate and persecute others who differ from them. Men who have no real religion at all can do this, as is evident in all persecutions, in the history of the Crusades, when hundreds of thousands, moved, as they imagined, with holy zeal, went to drive the Infidels from the Holy Land, and also in the Riots in Birmingham. Also to suffer in any cause with the spirit with which men die in battle, that is, with obstinacy and hatred, is not very difficult. *Mahometans* fight for their religion,

and the *North American Indians* die with the greatest heroism in this respect. But to suffer and die with meekness, with resignation to God, and good-will to men, not excepting our persecutors; to die praying with our Saviour, [*Luke* xxiii. 34,] "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," is a far more difficult attainment, but by no means uncommon among Christians.

Still less shall we be disturbed at the malignity of others, when we consider that our enemies, as well as our friends, are acting the part assigned them by the Supreme Ruler of the universe; that they are in their proper place, as well as we in ours, (though, being instigated by their own bad dispositions, this is no apology for their conduct,) and that the plan of the great *drama*, in which we are all actors, is so arranged, that good will finally result from the evil that we experience ourselves, or see in others. "The wrath of man," says the Psalmist, [*Ps.* lxxvi. 10,] "shall praise *God.*"

All the opposition we meet with, makes part of the useful and necessary discipline of life, and no great character could be formed, or any great good be done without it. Our Saviour, the apostles, the Reformers from Popery, and the *Puritans* and *Nonconformists*, were equally exposed to it. And shall we complain? We ought rather to think ourselves honoured by it, and, with the apostles, [*Acts* v. 41,] *rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer for the name of the Lord Jesus;* reflecting that, "if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him, and be glorified together." [*Rom.* viii. 17; 2 *Tim.* ii. 12.] Of our Lord himself, it is said, [*Heb.* xii. 2,] that "for the joy that was set before him, *he* endured the cross, despising the shame." Ought we not, then, I will not say, be displeased, and complain, but ought we not to rejoice, and be thankful for every part of that dispensation of Providence which we cannot doubt is calculated and intended to be so highly beneficial to us?

If we take a calm retrospect of our own past experience, we shall all of us, I am persuaded, be satisfied that many events, seemingly the most disastrous, were, in fact, the most beneficial to us; that they were really mercies, though in the disguise of judgments. And shall we not, then, conclude, that every other evil, coming from the same hand, equally leads to good, though we may not for the present see it to be so? When *Jacob* lost his beloved son *Joseph*, he said, [*Gen.* xlii. 36,] "All these things are against me;" though it appeared afterwards to be eminently *for* him. As

the Psalmist says, with respect to God, [*Psalm* xcvii. 2,] "Clouds and darkness are round about *him*, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne."

Thus instructed by the unerring word of God, and our own experience, as far as it goes, concurring with it, we may be prepared to adopt the noble language of the prophet *Habakkuk*, who, after enumerating the loss of every thing valuable to man, and that not only tended to his comfort, but was seemingly necessary to his existence in this life, could say, [*Ch.* iii. 18,] "Yet will I rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation." With respect to the society of friends, and every thing else that is most dear to us, (and many of these I shall be deprived of in leaving this connexion,) we must say with *Job*, [i. 21,] "The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Something may arise out of our afflictions, or even accompany them, that shall be an abundant compensation for them. And if they only teach us patience, fortitude, and trust in God, it is alone an abundant compensation, though they should bring nothing else along with them.

While we are sensible that we live under the government of a good Being, we cannot doubt but that every thing that befals us is intended for our good. We must not forget, that it is only by discipline, and often very severe discipline too, that great and excellent characters are ever formed; and no man can tell how much, or how severe discipline may be necessary for himself. *David* could say, [*Ps.* cxix. 67,] that "before *he* was afflicted, *he* went astray." And there is a source of satisfaction even in adversity, or nearly connected with it, that persons in prosperity and affluence have no idea of.

Of this, I am myself not without some experience. My violent expulsion from a favourite situation at Birmingham was, to appearance, sufficiently disastrous, and I was not without feeling it to be so. Yet I have had more than a recompence, internal and external, so as to make me consider it even now as no evil upon the whole; and I am far from wishing, if it were possible, that it might not have happened.

Among other resources afforded me by a kind Providence, was the seasonable and generous reception I met with among you; an event which I hope you are convinced I have endeavoured to improve.

Having, without any previous expectation, found a sphere

of usefulness, and a source of happiness here, I shall not despair of finding a similar situation in America. But there is no situation in the world in which they who are disposed to exert themselves in the service of mankind, (which is the most proper service of God, our common creator and parent,) may not find an opportunity of doing it, to more or less advantage; and no man is answerable for more than it is in his power to do.

But a state of suffering is a state of usefulness, no less than one of the most active exertion; and very frequently it operates in the most effectual and distinguished manner. Did not our Saviour effect more by his death, the apostles by their sufferings, and the Protestant martyrs by their various persecutions, than by their preaching? It is commonly and justly observed, that *example is before precept.* And what is it that demonstrates the real force of religious principles so much as patient suffering for them? It is a clear proof of the value that the sufferer sets upon them, and such as is more likely to impress others than any argument. And the experience of ages confirms the observation, so as to have given rise to the proverb, that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."

Was the persecution of the early Christians, of the Protestants in *France*, in the *Low Countries*, or in *England*, of any disservice to their cause? Did the persecution of the *Puritans*, by Queen *Elizabeth* and the *Stuarts*, diminish their numbers, or their zeal? It increased both, as appeared at the time of the Civil Wars. What do we learn on this subject, from the different treatment that *Dissenters* have met with in late times? They have constantly melted away in the sunshine of prosperity, and have become numerous and zealous in adversity. It is even probable that their numbers were diminished one third, if not one half, and the rest were growing very lukewarm, in the reigns of *George* I. and II., princes who were friendly to them; but of late their numbers and their zeal are greatly increased.

Shall we hesitate, then, to suffer in the cause of important truth, when we see it to be so greatly promoted by this means? If we have any value for our principles, we shall rejoice in the opportunities that are afforded us of serving the cause of truth in seasons of persecution, (occuring in the course of Divine Providence, and not sought by ourselves, for that would be ostentation and presumption,) as the only way in which many persons have it in their power to promote it, to any great purpose; for all can advance the

cause by suffering, though but few have sufficient ability to argue for it. But doubly honoured is the man whom Providence enables and disposes (for all is of God) to serve it in both these ways.

Besides, such a degree of persecution as that to which we are exposed, will tend to purge our societies of lukewarm and unworthy members; of men who prefer the world, and the things of it, to the cause of truth and a good conscience; and such are many of the richer sort among us, and in all societies; men who, by associating with other rich and worldly-minded men, and especially those who are within the influence of a court, and the honours and emoluments derived from it, catch too much of their spirit, become assimilated to their manners, and adopt their views. Let all such go to their proper place; we want them not. We want not even their wealth. True Christianity does not suppose or require it. But in all cases of persecution, some of the most wealthy have proved the most zealous.

True Christians, devoid of superstition, will meet for public worship, and edify one another, even without the aid or expense of regular ministers. These are, no doubt, a convenience, but by no means necessary, even to the administration of the ordinances of Baptism, or the Lord's Supper. And, in situations in which ministers cannot be had, Christian laymen will, I hope, have the good sense to do, themselves, every thing that has been usually done by their ministers; and at this time there are helps abundantly sufficient for the purpose, even though Christian societies should be as destitute of talents as of wealth.

This excellent lesson will be taught more effectually in a season of adversity, than of prosperity. And we ought to be thankful for every situation in which such valuable instruction is best inculcated. In the present and best ages of Christianity, *not many wise men after the flesh*, and *not many mighty men were chosen.* [1 *Cor.* 1. 26.] And our Saviour even thanked his heavenly Father, [*Matt.* xi. 25,] that the gospel was *hidden from the wise and prudent;* not the truly wise, but from worldly wise men, those who have the world and the things of it for their chief object.

When riches and honours are the reward of Christianity, it will be thought by the world, that the profession of it is adopted for the sake of those riches and honours, and no other reason of their conduct will be so much as looked for. But when a man's faith is attended with persecution, and

abuse in every form, it will be evident that it has some other foundation, and such as will be thought worth inquiring into. And a dispassionate inquiry is all that truth, and Christianity if it be founded on truth, requires. The same is the case with respect to any particular mode or form of Christianity. It disclaims all connexion with civil power and worldly emolument.

It may justly be our pride, that, as *Unitarians*, our religion has been so far from being befriended, that it has, in all ages, and in all nations, been frowned upon by the civil magistrate; and yet, in these seemingly unfavourable circumstances, it has constantly gained ground, and of late in a tenfold proportion to what it has ever done before, with thinking and serious men. Can there be a surer indication than this, that it will continue to gain ground, till it establish itself universally? But even then, it will, I trust, be as independent as it is at present, of that civil *power* which is now hostile to it. Hereafter, when time shall have abated the force of prejudice, it may be recorded to your honour, that you received not myself, as an individual, but an *Unitarian*, so obnoxious to popular odium as I have been, as well as to have had such a man as a *Price* (whose eulogium I need not make to you) for your minister.

Having shewn this Christian fortitude, and acted with so much true judgment, I hope you will continue to act the same part, unmoved by the censures of an unthinking world, and promoting the peace and welfare of your country, with being enemies to which we are most unjustly charged.

Should those calamitous times, the approach of which, led, as I conceived, by the light of scripture prophecy compared with the present aspect of things, I expressed my apprehensions of in my late *Fast Sermon*,* really come, the Christian principles which I have, in this discourse, endeavoured to recommend to you, will be your best security; teaching you both how to *act*, and how to *suffer*, as circumstances may require. In this case, though absent, I shall not exult in my safety from the storm, but sympathize with you, and almost wish to suffer along with you. For it is not any dread of this nature, but other circumstances, as you well know, that induce me to leave you.

In all events, our separation, and that from any of our friends, by death, or otherwise, is, in the eye of reason, of short continuance. For what are the remains of life which

* See *supra*, pp. 515, 533.

separate us from the dead, to any of us? It is, as the apostle says, [*James* iv. 14,] but as "a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." And then, my Christian friends, you will rejoin your late most excellent pastor, Dr. Price, and all your deceased worthy pastors and friends, where you will not stand in need of our instructions, but derive knowledge from purer sources than ours, by nearer approaches to the great Fountain of light.

There every cloud of error and prejudice, and especially those which lead us to mistake each other's characters, and to think worse of one another than any of us, I hope, ought to do, will disappear. And the happy consequence of this will be, many persons embracing one another as brethren, who were here the most hostile to each other.

Then every truth will be seen, not only in its whole evidence, but in its proper importance. Bigotry, consequently, will be unknown, and no mistakes but those of the heart will be thought to be of any moment at all.

Could we imbibe those sentiments here below, we should make earth itself a perfect heaven; and our doing this, as well as we are able, will be our best preparation for that blissful state. To have assisted any of you in this most important preparation, for what the apostle in my text calls *the inheritance of the saints in light*, would be my greatest praise, as to meet you there would be my greatest joy.

As an evidence of your having imbibed the true spirit of Christianity yourselves, and of your being sensible of its importance, you will, each of you, exert yourselves in your several spheres, to extend the knowledge of it to others, and also endeavour to infuse the same spirit into them. Do not imagine that this is the business of ministers only. *Clergy* and *laity*, in the sense in which the terms are now used, are unknown in the Scriptures. All Christians are there distinguished by the phrase that is now rendered *clergy*. All Christians are there said to be, [*Rev.* i. 6,] "kings and priests unto God;" and every man who can teach, should be a teacher; and without any ordination, besides the request of his fellow-christians, administer every Christian ordinance.

But, independently of this, which may be said to require some talents and ability, not possessed by all, there is a method in which all Christians, without exception, may be teachers of Christianity, and recommend it to others. It is by the open profession of it, and by a life and conversation conformable to it. This, though a silent, is, in many

respects, the most effectual method of preaching. "Let your light shine before men, that they, *seeing* your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven." [*Matt.* v. 16.]

But the mere open profession of Christianity by persons of respectable characters, that is, persons in general esteem for their good sense and good conduct, in an age like this, abounding with unbelievers, is of itself of great importance. Gladly would unbelievers have it to say, that all men of sense are with them. On the contrary, I am confident that, whatever may be said with respect to good sense, or natural ability, which is often employed to the worst of purposes, men of real knowledge and reflection, as well as men of virtue and integrity, men who have given the most serious attention to the subject, and men of the most upright and unbiassed minds, without which natural ability will avail but little, are with us.

But to recommend Christianity to men of reason and reflection, it must be made to appear a rational thing. Men cannot embrace as sacred truth any thing at which their common sense revolts. Nor can that be considered as a truth of revealed religion, which is contrary to the most obvious and acknowledged truths of natural religion. And the greatest part of the unbelief of the present age, has evidently arisen from the gross abuses and corruptions of Christianity, especially such as are supported by the civil establishments of it. These it is the duty of every enlightened Christian, as he values his religion, and wishes to extend the knowledge of it, strenuously to oppose. And the present state of things calls for this in a peculiar manner.

Unbelievers must be shewn that their triumph over such Christianity as is supported by the State will avail them nothing. It is only their triumph over error and superstition, which are the bane of Christianity. What do they gain by exposing such doctrines as those of *Transubstantiation* and the *Trinity?* These are not the doctrines of the Scriptures, but the absurd devices of men; doctrines which, indeed, naturally arose in the state of things in which Christianity was embraced by Heathens, previously tinctured with their peculiar notions, but contrary to the plainest maxims and axioms of the Scriptures.

The doctrine of *the Unity of God*, is the one great object of the whole of the Jewish religion, and assumed as a fundamental principle in Christianity. The first of all the commandments is, [*Exod.* xx. 3,] "Thou shalt have no

other Gods before me;" and who was the speaker but *Jehovah*, the great Creator of heaven and earth, the same great Being who in the *New Testament* is styled [2 *Cor.* xi. 31] "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," and surely not Jesus Christ himself; because then there would be no such person as God the Father at all; whereas the apostle says, "To us there is one God, *even* the Father; and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." [1 *Cor.* viii. 6; 1 *Tim.* ii. 5.]

Again, in all the civil establishments of Christianity, the character of the one God and Father of all has been greatly debased by the idea of his arbitrarily selecting certain individuals of the human race, as the objects of his especial favour, while all the rest are left under an irreversible sentence of condemnation; and also by the idea of the inexorableness of his disposition, in not receiving penitent offenders, till satisfaction had been made to his justice by the death of Christ. Whereas his most solemn declarations to Moses, and all the prophets, as a *God merciful and gracious*, who *for his name's sake*, and *his mercy's sake* only, pardons offences, though ever so great; and all the discourses and parables of our Saviour, especially his most instructive parable of the Prodigal Son, exhibit him in a very different and much more amiable light, as requiring no atonement, or satisfaction whatever, besides the repentance and return of the worst of sinners.

If we have any real value for Christianity, we should exert ourselves to free it from these great incumbrances, which have already done it the greatest injury, and endangered its very existence. And if other well-meaning persons, from the fault of their education, and early impressions, exert themselves with great zeal in maintaining these spurious doctrines, we ought to shew no less zeal in favour of the great truths of which they are an infringement. If they imagine that they maintain the honour of Christ by asserting his divinity, are not we maintaining the honour of God, by refusing to allow any being whatever to share with him in those honours which he has declared that he will not give to another?

Let this, however, be done with all due allowance for the innocent prejudices of others; so as to think no worse of the moral characters of men, or their final state, on account of any mere difference of opinion. True piety and benevolence, or the love of God and of our neighbour, to produce which is the great object of all religion, are

not confined to *Unitarians;* though, thinking more favourably of the character of the Supreme Being, and not thinking any man the object of his displeasure on account of his opinions, these great virtues, the foundation of all the rest, may be expected to find an easier entrance into our breasts, than into those of *Calvinists* and *Trinitarians*, who, thinking those who differ from them to be the objects of the Divine abhorrence, may imagine that they cannot do wrong in entertaining the same sentiments concerning them; and this is the foundation of all persecution.

It is to the honour of this society, an honour which I hope you will never lose, to be generally understood to hold the Christian faith in the purity that I have described; having obtained the honourable denomination of *an Unitarian Society;* for this implies all the rest. The opinions of single persons are often overlooked, or disregarded; but *a Christian Church* is as *a city set on a hill, that cannot be hid;* and when they shall become numerous, (and they are continually increasing,) they cannot fail to attract universal attention. And this cannot but operate in the most favourable manner for the interest of Christianity in general. Indeed, it is sufficiently obvious at this day, that it cannot stand on any other ground.

I cannot conclude this Discourse, the last that I shall probably deliver from this pulpit, without expressing my satisfaction in your choice of my successor.* It has been such as cannot fail to do you honour with the truly enlightened part of the community. I would not, and least of all in this place, flatter you, or him. But this I will say, that by making choice, as you have done, of a person to suceeed me, who will conduct your devotions, and carry on plans of instruction, public and private, as I am persuaded he will, on the same principles, and in all respects as much to the satisfaction of the judicious part of the audience, you have greatly lessened the pain that I shall feel from our separation. It will appear to me, as if I were still with you in his person.

May the connexion be long and happy. Under his ministry, and that of his worthy colleague, may you be built up in the pure faith of the gospel, inspiring the genuine spirit, and discharging all the duties of it, that when *the great Shepherd shall appear, and take an accouut of his servants, you may be found of him without spot and blameless,*

* See the *Dedication* to Mr. Belsham, *supra*, p. 194.

and not be ashamed before him at his coming. And then, in the mean time, though absent from you, I may hear of your welfare, which, next to continuing with you, and promoting the same great cause myself, will make me most happy.

Having now closed my Discourse to the proper congregation, I shall take the liberty to address a few words to the many strangers, who, as I expected, I perceive to be present.

Most of you, I presume, are come hither from an innocent curiosity to see and hear a person of whom you have heard much evil, and perhaps some good, and whom you do not expect to see or hear any more. Others, though I hope not many, may have come for some less innocent purpose. These, let them come whenever they pleased, must have found themselves disappointed; and I hope agreeably so; as, instead of finding any occasion of harm to me, they may have found some good to themselves. Nothing else can they have heard here; nothing but what is calculated to confirm the faith of all Christians, and to inculcate those sentiments of the heart, and that conduct in life, which are the proper fruits of that faith. All the doctrines that have been taught here, are those relating to the being, the attributes, and the providence of God; the divine missions of *Moses* and *the prophets*, of *Christ* and *the apostles*, and that future state of righteous retribution, which they preached. These great articles of faith you have heard not only asserted, but if you have attended frequently, repeatedly proved by rational arguments.

This a person disposed to cavil will allow; but he may say that he has likewise heard many things heretical, and offensive to him. This is very possible: for every tenet contrary to that which any particular person has been used to consider as true, will, of course, be by him deemed false, and therefore heretical, and more or less offensive. But are we not at liberty in this country to think and judge for ourselves? And as to every reasonable cause of offence, all doctrines are to be judged of by their moral tendency, agreeably to the rule of our Saviour, [*Matt.* vii. 20,] "By their fruits ye shall know them."

Now, what is the apparent moral tendency of the doctrines concerning God and his moral government, that have been constantly taught in this place, but a life of obedience to his will? And is this moral tendency lessened by the belief that this God is *one Being;* or is it at all improved

or strengthened, by the belief of there being *three persons in the Godhead?* On the contrary, is not the understanding confounded and distracted, by the very attempt (which, after all, must be unavailing) to reconcile the doctrine of *three Divine persons*, with the fundamental doctrine of the Scriptures, that there is but *one God?* And by what conceivable operation can the temper and disposition of mind be improved by such confusion of ideas, and such embarrassment; to say nothing of the absurdity and impiety of the doctrine?

You have heard great stress laid upon the doctrine of *the divinity of Christ.* But, besides that this is plainly setting up another God than the *one* God and Father of Jesus Christ, what is gained by it? Are the doctrines and precepts of the gospel of less force because the persons who taught them were not themselves gods? On this principle, the law of Moses would have no obligation; and every thing taught by the apostles, who certainly were not gods, must be disregarded; whereas, it is *the authority* by which doctrines are taught, and not *the persons*, or *instruments*, by whom they are taught, that is to be regarded; and this authority we all consider as properly divine.

Lastly, will the human character sustain any injury with respect to his love of *justice* and *equity*, in consequence of being taught that God, whom we are to resemble, is impartial in his regards to all his creatures of mankind, and shews no especial favour to any but for their superior virtue? Or will any man be less kind or merciful, by believing God to be more so? When we make the Divine Being our pattern, and pray that he would *forgive us as we forgive others*, shall we not be even more disposed to entertain proper sentiments towards our offending brother, when we are taught that if he only *repent*, we must forgive him; rather than if we were to be led, in imitation of the supposed conduct of God, to demand some other atonement or satisfaction of him?

These, however, are the most offensive doctrines that have ever been heard from this place, or inculcated in any of my writings. Judge, then, yourselves, of the ground of the offence that has been taken.

As to the charge of sedition, nothing that can, by any construction, be supposed to have that tendency, has ever been delivered from this pulpit; unless it be sedition to teach what the apostles taught before, [*Acts* v. 29,] viz. that we are "to obey God rather than men," and that in what relates to *religion* and *conscience*, we disclaim all human

authority, even that of *King*, *Lords* and *Commons*. In these things we acknowledge only *one Father*, *even God*, and *one Master*, *even Christ*, the messenger or ambassador of God. If any doctrine be really false, being contrary to reason and the Scriptures, it is not an act of parliament that can make it true. Or, if any action be morally wrong, as being contrary to natural justice and equity, it is not an act of parliament that can make it right. But, while we thus render "unto God the things that are God's," we "render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's." [*Matt.* xxii. 21.] We are *subject* to every civil "ordinance of man for the Lord's sake," [1 *Peter* ii. 13,] though not their ordinances relating to *religion*. And whether we think any particular civil regulations to be wise or not, (and with respect to things of this nature, as well as others, different men will think differently,) we submit to the decision of the majority, and are the friends of peace and good order.

Learn, then, not to give ear to mere calumny; but, according to the old English maxim, suppose every man to be innocent till he be proved to be guilty, and in all matters of *opinion*, allow to others the liberty that you take yourselves. As to *us*, I trust that we have learned of Christ [*Matt.* v. 44] to "bless them that curse *us*, and pray for them that despitefully use *us* and persecute *us*." In the language of the Liturgy we pray, that God would "forgive our enemies, persecutors and slanderers, and turn their hearts."

Whether, then, you come as friends or as enemies; whether we shall ever see one another's faces again or not; may God, whose providence is over all, bless, preserve, and keep us. Above all, may we be preserved in the paths of virtue and piety, that we may have a happy meeting in that world where error and prejudice will be no more; where all the ground of the party distinctions that subsist here will be taken away; where every misunderstanding will be cleared up, and the reign of truth and of virtue will be for ever established.

APPENDIX.*

No. I.

(See *supra*, p. 260.)

Deut. i. 1. These *be* the words which Moses spake unto all Israel on this side Jordan, in the Wilderness, in the plain over against the Red *Sea*, between Paran, and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Dizahab.

—— iv. 1—40. Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes, and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do *them*, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers giveth you. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish *ought* from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you. Your eyes have seen what the Lord did because of Baal-peor: for all the men that followed Baal-peor, the Lord thy God hath destroyed them from among you. But ye that did cleave unto the Lord your God *are* alive every one of you this day. Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep, therefore, and do *them:* for this *is* your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation *is* a wise and understanding people. For what nation *is there so* great, who *hath* God *so* nigh unto them, as the Lord our God *is* in all *things that* we call upon him *for?* And what nation *is there so* great, that hath statutes and judgments *so* righteous, as all this law which I set before you this day? Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life; but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons: *Specially* the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb, when the Lord said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and *that* they may teach their children. And ye came near, and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness. And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only *ye heard* a voice. And he declared unto you his covenant which he commanded you to perform, *even* ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone.

And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it. Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves;

* The articles mentioned, *supra*, pp. 3, 82, as designed for this Appendix, are reserved to appear in another part of the present edition.

for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day *that* the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: Lest ye corrupt *yourselves*, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female. The likeness of any beast that *is* on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, the likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that *is* in the waters beneath the earth: And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, *even* all the host of heaven, thou shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven. But the Lord hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, *even* out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as *ye are* this day. Furthermore the Lord was angry with me for your sakes, and sware that I should not go over Jordan, and that I should not go in unto that good land which the Lord thy God giveth thee *for* an inheritance: But I must die in this land, I must not go over Jordan: but ye shall go over, and possess that good land. Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, *or* the likeness of any *thing* which the Lord thy God hath forbidden thee. For the Lord thy God *is* a consuming fire, *even* a jealous God.

When thou shalt beget children and children's children, and shalt have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt *yourselves*, and make a graven image, *or* the likeness of any *thing*, and shall do evil in the sight of the Lord thy God, to provoke him to anger; I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong *your* days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed. And the Lord shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the Heathen, whither the Lord shall lead you. And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell. But if from thence thou shalt seek the *Lord* thy God, thou shalt find *him*, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul. When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, *even* in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice; (for the Lord thy God *is* a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them. For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and *ask* from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been *any such thing* as this great thing *is*, or hath been heard like it? Did *ever* people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live? Or hath God assayed to go *and* take him a nation from the midst of *another* nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? Unto thee it was shewed, that thou

mightest know that the Lord he *is* God; *there is* none else beside him. Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee: and upon earth he shewed thee his great fire, and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire. And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt; to drive out nations from before thee, greater and mightier than thou *art*, to bring thee in, to give thee their land *for* an inheritance, as *it is* this day. Know therefore this day, and consider *it* in thine heart, that the Lord he *is* God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: *there is* none else. Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong *thy* days upon the earth, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, for ever.

Deut. vi. 1—23. Now these *are* the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do *them* in the land whither ye go to possess it: That thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments which I command thee; thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life, and that thy days may be prolonged. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do *it;* that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God *is* one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, and houses full of all good *things*, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not, when thou shalt have eaten, and be full; *then* beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which *are* round about you; (for the Lord thy God *is* a jealous God among you;) lest the anger of the Lord thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth.

Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God, as ye tempted *him* in Massah. Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded thee. And thou shalt do *that which is* right and good in the sight of the Lord: that it may be well with thee, and that thou

mayest go in, and possess the good land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers; to cast out all thine enemies from before thee, as the Lord hath spoken. *And* when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What *mean* the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments which the Lord our God hath commanded you? Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand: And the Lord shewed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers. And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as *it is* at this day. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us.

Deut. vii. 1—26. When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perrizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; and when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, *and* utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. For thou *art* an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that *are* upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye *were* the fewest of all people: But because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he *is* God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him, and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations; and repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face. Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day to do them.

Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers: And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and

the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee. Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle. And the Lord will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all *them* that hate thee. And thou shalt consume all the people which the Lord thy God shall deliver thee; thine eye shall have no pity upon them: neither shalt thou serve their gods; for that *will be* a snare unto thee. If thou shalt say in thine heart, These nations *are* more than I; how can I dispossess them? Thou shalt not be afraid of them: *but* shalt well remember what the Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt; the great temptations which thine eyes saw, and the signs, and the wonders, and the mighty hand, and the stretched-out arm, whereby the Lord thy God brought thee out: so shall the Lord thy God do unto all the people of whom thou art afraid. Moreover the Lord thy God will send the hornet among them, until they that are left, and hide themselves from thee, be destroyed. Thou shalt not be affrighted at them: for the Lord thy God *is* among you, a mighty God and terrible. And the Lord thy God will put out those nations before thee by little and little: thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee. But the Lord thy God shall deliver them unto thee, and shall destroy them with a mighty destruction, until they be destroyed. And he shall deliver their kings into thine hand, and thou shalt destroy their name from under heaven; there shall no man be able to stand before thee, until thou have destroyed them. The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not desire the silver or gold *that is* on them, nor take *it* unto thee, lest thou be snared therein: for it *is* an abomination to the Lord thy God. Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it: *but* thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it *is* a cursed thing.

No. II.

(See *supra*, p. 552.)

HAVING originally got the leading ideas that are enlarged upon in the preceding *Discourse*, from Dr. Hartley's *Observations on Man*, a work published in 1749, I think it may not be amiss to subjoin to it some extracts from that work, as, from his authority, the serious apprehensions with which I have, ever since I read it, been impressed, will receive more weight than they could acquire from any person, who, writing in these times, might be supposed to be particularly influenced by the aspect of them, and by his own situation with respect to them. I wish likewise by this, as well as every other means, to direct the attention of my readers to that most excellent work, to which I am indebted, if I may so say, for the whole moral conformation of my mind.

" How near the dissolution of the present governments, generally or particularly, may be, would be great rashness to affirm. Christ

will come in this sense also, *as a thief in the night.* Our duty is, therefore, to watch and to pray; to be faithful stewards; to give meat, and all other requisites, in due season, to those under our care; and to endeavour by these, and all other lawful means, to preserve the government, under whose protection we live, from dissolution, seeking the peace of it, and submitting to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. No prayers, no endeavours of this kind can fail of having some good effect, public or private, for the preservation of ourselves or others. The great dispensations of Providence are conducted by means that are either secret, or, if they appear, that are judged feeble and inefficacious. No man can tell, however private his station may be, but his fervent prayer may avail to the salvation of much people. But it is more peculiarly the duty of magistrates thus to watch over their subjects, to pray for them, and to set about the reformation of all matters civil and ecclesiastical, to the utmost of their power. Good governors may promote the welfare and continuance of a state, and wicked ones must accelerate its ruin. The sacred history affords us instances of both kinds, and they are recorded there for the admonition of kings and princes in all future times." *

" There are many prophecies which declare the fall of the ecclesiastical powers of the Christian world; and though each church seems to flatter itself with the hopes of being exempted, yet it is very plain that the prophetical characters belong to all. They have all left the true, pure, simple religion, and teach for doctrines the commandments of men. They are all merchants of the earth, and have set up a kingdom of this world, abounding in riches, temporal power, and external pomp. They have all a dogmatizing spirit, and persecute such as do not receive their own mark, and worship the image which they have set up. They all neglect Christ's command of preaching the gospel to all nations, and even that of going to *the lost sheep of the house of Israel,* there being innumerable multitudes in all Christian countries who have never been taught to read, and who are in other respects also, destitute of the means of saving knowledge. It is very true that the Church of Rome, is *Babylon the great and the mother of harlots, and of the abominations of the earth.* But all the rest have copied her example more or less. They have all received money, like *Gehazi;* and therefore the leprosy of *Naaman* will cleave to them, and to their seed for ever. And this impurity may be considered, not only as justifying the application of the prophecies to all the Christian churches, but as a natural cause for their downfal. The corrupt governors of the several churches will ever oppose the true gospel, and in so doing will bring ruin upon themselves." †

" As the downfal of the *Jewish* state under *Titus* was the occasion of the publication of the gospel to us Gentiles, so our downfal may contribute to the restoration of the *Jews,* and both together bring on the final publication and prevalence of the true religion.—Thus the type and the thing typified will coincide. The first-fruits and the lump are made holy together." ‡

* Hartley's *Observations,* 1791, II. (*Prop.* lxxxi.) p. 368.
† *Ibid.* (*Prop.* lxxxii.) pp. 370, 371. ‡ *Ibid.* (*Prop.* lxxxiii.) p. 375.

"The downfal of the civil and ecclesiastical powers—must both be attended with such public calamities, as will make men serious, and also drive them from the countries of *Christendom* into the remote parts of the world, particularly into the *East* and *West Indies;* whither, consequently, they will carry their religion, now purified from errors and superstitions." *

"That worldly-mindedness, and neglect of duty in the clergy, must hasten our ruin, cannot be doubted. These are *the salt of the earth* and *the light of the world.* If they lose their savour, the whole nation, where this happens, will be converted into one putrid mass; if their light become darkness, the whole body politic must be dark also. The degeneracy of the court of *Rome,* and secular bishops abroad, are too notorious to be mentioned. They almost cease to give offence, as they scarce pretend to any function or authority besides what is temporal. Yet still there is great mockery of God in their external pomp, and profanation of sacred titles; which, sooner or later, will bring down vengeance upon them. And as the court of *Rome* has been at the head of the great apostasy and corruption of the Christian church, and seems evidently marked out in various places of the Scriptures, the severest judgments are probably reserved for her.

"But I rather choose to speak to what falls under the observation of all serious, attentive persons in this kingdom. The superior clergy are in general ambitious, and eager in the pursuit of riches; flatterers of the great, and subservient to party interest; negligent of their own immediate charges, and also of the inferior clergy and their immediate charges. The inferior clergy imitate their superiors, and, in general, take little more care of their parishes than barely what is necessary to avoid the censure of the law. And the clergy of all ranks are, in general, either ignorant, or if they do apply, it is rather to profane learning, to philosophical or political matters, than to the study of the Scriptures, of the oriental languages, of the fathers and ecclesiastical authors, and of the writings of devout men in different ages of the church. I say this is in general the case; that is, far the greater part of the clergy of all ranks in this kingdom are of this kind. But there are some of a quite different character; men eminent for piety, sacred learning, and the faithful discharge of their duty, and who, it is not to be doubted, mourn in secret for the crying sins of this and other nations. The clergy, in general, are also far more free from open and gross vices, than any other denomination of men amongst us, physicians, lawyers, merchants, soldiers, &c. However, this may be otherwise hereafter; for it is said that in some foreign countries the superior clergy, in others the inferior, are as corrupt and abandoned, or more so, than any other order of men. The clergy in this kingdom seem to be what one might expect from the mixture of good and bad influences that affect them. But, then, if we make this candid allowance for *them,* we must also make it for persons in the high ranks of life, for their infidelity, lewdness, and sordid self-interest. And though it becomes an humble, charitable and impar-

* Hartley's *Observations,* II. (*Prop.* lxxxiv.) p. 377.

tial man, to make all these allowances; yet he cannot but see, that the judgments of God are ready to fall upon us all for these things; and that they may fall first, and with the greatest weight, upon those, who, having the highest office committed to them in the spiritual kingdom of Christ, neglect it, and are become mere *merchants of the earth*, and *shepherds that feed themselves, and not their flocks.*" *

"These are my real and earnest sentiments upon these points. It would be great rashness to fix a time for the breaking of the storm that hangs over our heads, as it is blindness and infatuation not to see it; nor to be aware, that it may break: and yet this infatuation has always attended all falling states. The kingdoms of *Judah* and *Israel*, which are the types of all the rest, were thus infatuated. It may be, that the prophecies concerning *Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, Egypt*, &c., will become applicable to particular kingdoms before their fall, and warn the good to flee out of them. And *Christendom* in general seems ready to assume to itself the place and lot of the *Jews*, after they had rejected their Messiah, the Saviour of the world. Let no one deceive himself, or others. The present circumstances of the world are extraordinary and critical, beyond what has ever yet happened. If we refuse to let Christ reign over us, as our Redeemer and Saviour, we must be slain before his face, as enemies, at his second coming." †

To these passages from Dr. Hartley, I shall add another from an excellent "*Sermon preached in the Chapel of Trinity College, Cambridge, December* 19, 1793, *the day appointed for the Commemoration of the Benefactors to that Society.*"

"Nature recoils with horror at the spectacle now presented by their unfortunate country (France). Under the guidance however of Divine revelation, the contemplative mind may discern the signs of these times, and the hand of Providence directing the madness of the people. The oracles of truth, when foretelling the persecutions to be endured by Christians, assure us, *He that killeth with the sword, must be killed with the sword.* 'They have shed, (saith the angel,) the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.' ‡ Destruction awaits the persecutor. And it must excite our astonishment to see vestiges of this righteous dispensation in what is passing before us. Lyons is recorded in early history, as the spot where a company of martyrs glorified God. § Lyons is now devoted, and its name erased from the memory of man. Paris once streamed with the blood of the Hugonots: Paris has been since dyed with the slaughter of that court and clergy which instigated the unutterable deed.

"Let us too be honest in declaring, whether if the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew, the Revocation of the Edict of Nantz, or a

* Hartley's *Observations*, II. (*Conclusion*) pp. 450, 451.

† *Ibid.* p. 455.

‡ See *Rev.* xi. 5, 18; xiii. 10; xvi. 6; xviii. 6, 24. *(Serm.)*

§ A. D. 177. Marcus Antoninus, Emp. Lardner, A. H. T. Ch. xv. Sect. ii. [*Works*, VII. pp. 417—432.] Mosheim, Eccl. Hist. Cent. II. Pt. i. Ch. ii. Sect. vi. *(Serm.)*

Spanish act of faith, were dictated by the spirit of antichrist; the deprivation of the *two thousand* Ejected Ministers,* the severities which forced our countrymen to take refuge in the wilds of America, and the two religious conflagrations which have disgraced our own days,† demonstrated the presiding influence of a mind like that which was in Jesus.

"One particular in which the prophecy appears to enlighten us, is the fate of the Gallican Church. The revolted city of the Apocalypse is supposed to represent the antichristian community established in the European territory of the western Roman empire, still subsisting in its pollarchical and dismembered state. Of this city it is written, that the fall of a tenth part would a short time precede that of the rest; and that its overthrow would be accompanied by an earthquake, and the destruction of *seven chiliads of the names of men.*‡ As France was one of the ten kingdoms founded on the ruins of the western empire; as violent commotions are now agitating the political world, *from the Borysthenes to the Atlantic;* as seven classes have lately been deprived of their privileges and titles; the curiosity of the Christian scholar is beyond measure excited, and will be gratified with the discovery of various circumstances which will confirm his faith, but which a desire of brevity obliges me to refer to his private consideration. One question, however, I cannot help proposing; that if *we* be of that chosen people who have in truth come out of Babylon, who partake not of her sins, and merit not her plagues; why should we appear unprepared, or disinclined, to comply with the angelic mandate, and begin, at least, some prelude to that song of triumph,

* On the already famous Saint Bartholomew's day, 1662. Hume. *(Serm.)* See *supra*, p. 390.

† "It may be urged, that the Riots in London in 1780, and at Birmingham in 1791, are to be ascribed to *the populace*. But it is not very credible that an uninstigated multitude would trouble themselves about Popery, or Unitarianism. A much more probable solution of the phenomenon is, in my opinion, to be found by considering the natural, though latent, operation of those *principles* which have since been more unblushingly avowed. See a circular Letter from Dr. Horsley, Bishop of St. David's, to the clergy of his diocese, recommending contributions for the French clergy. His Lordship was soon after translated to the see of Rochester, and deanery of Westminster. He proceeds to *excite the charity* of his Cambro-british flock in the following *evangelical* rapture:—'Persons, who, professing to receive our Lord as a teacher, as the very Mahometans receive him, call in question however, what is not called in question by the Mahometans, the infallibility of his doctrine; and under the mask of an affected zeal for civil and religious liberty, are endeavouring to propagate in this country, those very notions of the sovereignty of the people, the rights of man, and an unlimited right of private judgment, in opposition to ecclesiastical discipline; those treasonable and atheistical notions, which in France have wrought the total subversion of the civil and ecclesiastical constitution, the confusion of all rights, the abolition of all property, the extinction of all religion, and the loss of liberty to the individual, except that of blaspheming God and reviling kings!!!'" *(Serm.)*

‡ "*Rev.* xi. 13. *Rabaud de St. Etienne*, in his history of the French Revolution, B. i. p. 28, enumerates the opponents it had to encounter. '1. Nobles. 2. The Military. 3. Privileged persons, exempt from certain imposts. 4. Priests. 5. Monastic orders. 6. Farmers-general. 7. The Law. These formed *La haute Nation.* The French nobility was itself also subdivided into seven classes. 1. The higher order of clergy. 2. *Les grands Seigneurs.* 3. *Présentés Connus.* 4. *Présentés Inconnus.* 5. *Non-Présentés.* 6. *Anoblis.* 7. *Gens moins que rien*, that is, all the new nobility.' *Star*, Jan. 2, 1794." *(Serm.)* See Vol. VIII. p. 6, *Note* *.

'Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her?'" (*Rev.* xviii. 20.)

"The legislators of France are Deists!* While they expatiated freely in every region of *useful* science, they were enjoined to *take for granted* those 'controversial matters of religion,' their 'forefathers had some good reason for steadily adhering to.'† They were not permitted to distinguish the doctrines of our Lord from those of their Church. Their mind, arrived at maturity in some points, disdained the puerilities on which they dared not speculate; and rejected the Gospel, on account of the meretricious dress in which it was introduced to them.

"The legislators of France are Deists! Much as we may lament their infidelity in their private capacity, we rejoice that, as lawgivers, they are Unbelievers. Indifferent alike to all professions, and all sects, they will not form an unnatural alliance with one, nor proscribe all others with civil incapacities, imprisonment, and death. Every persuasion will enjoy their equal and wise protection;‡ and genuine Christianity, undisguised with absurd confessions, and not made contemptible by ridiculous ceremonies, will exert her proper energies; will present to the understanding of the individual her miraculous credentials of prophecies completed in our times; and gain her establishment, not in word, but in deed; not in the civil code, but in the heart; not as a necessary engine of the State, but as the truth, and the way to eternal life.§ Superstition will no longer *rear her mitred front in their courts and parliaments*;‖ but the dominion of Christ, triumphant in that

* "*Sittings of the Jacobins*, Dec. 11. 'I neither think it wise nor prudent, (exclaimed the member) to extinguish the idea of God in the minds of the people. For my own part, I make here my profession of faith, and declare that I believe in the existence of a God.' This declaration was received with the loudest applauses; and every member rising up exclaimed, 'Yes, we all believe in God.' *Courier*, Dec. 23, 1793. This, together with the recollection, that the Supreme Being is acknowledged in their new constitution, as the witness in whose presence they proclaim the *rights of man*, and whose worship they declare inviolable, may dissipate the foolish delusion that they are a nation of Athiests." (*Serm.*)

† "See the Vice-Chancellor's speech at the trial of Mr. Frend," p. 186. (*Serm.*); *supra*, p. 433, *Note* *.

‡ "'On the 6th of December, 1793, the following decree was passed:

'I. The national convention forbids all violence and menaces against the freedom of religious worship. II. The vigilance of the constituted authorities, and the activity of the public force, shall be exerted to this end; and shall employ all means that may be requisite to give security to the religious worship of all persuasions,' &c. *Cambridge Intelligencer*, Dec. 21.

"In consequence of this, as we are informed in the *Star* of Dec. 21, on the 9th all the churches of Paris were again opened to say mass; and the number of persons who frequented them on that day, was immense. Peace then to those *honest* men, who report that all public worship is abolished in France; and to those *wise* ones, who believe them! The difference is this: the *mass*, where it is at present adopted, is the voluntary service of unconstrained individuals; and not, as before, the compulsory and exclusive one, enforced by penalties on the whole community. The multitude will be permitted, till they grow more enlightened, to carry about the *host*; but restrained, when they begin to *insult the persons*, or *burn the houses*, of those who do not choose to kneel down to it." (*Serm.*)

§ "The author has since observed this idea supported, almost in the same words, in *Letters from France*, III. 139, IV. 149." (*Serm.*)

‖ Alluding to Mr. Burke's encomium on the Church of England. (*P.*)

country, will be an earnest of his obtaining the 'Heathen for *his* inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for *his* possession.'"*

No. III.

(See *supra*, p. 552.)

TO THE CONGREGATION OF PROTESTANT DISSENTERS, AT THE GRAVEL-PIT MEETING, IN HACKNEY.

Clapton, February 21, 1794.

My Christian Friends,

After spending little more than two years with you, I find it expedient to leave you. But you will believe me, when I assure you, that this resolution is not occasioned by any complaint that I have to make with respect to you. On the contrary, it was singularly generous in you to receive me when you did, driven, as I was, by violence from a favourite situation, and likely, from the prejudice of the times, to bring suspicion on any congregation that should make choice of me.

I have been happy to find that, though many (as, on several accounts, was very natural) objected to the conduct of the majority, and left the society, some partially, and others altogether, your numbers are not, on the whole, diminished; and especially that, contrary to the expectations of most, I have found a sufficiently ample field of usefulness in the classes of young persons who have attended my lectures. These I leave with peculiar regret, having had peculiar satisfaction in my attention to them, and in their improvement in religious knowledge; many of them, I doubt not, being well qualified to instruct others. I hope that, in your choice of a successor to me,† (in which I pray for your best direction,) their interest will not be neglected; more substantial good, I am, from long experience, well persuaded, being done in this way, than in the best discharge of any other part of the ministerial duty.

Distant as is the country to which I find it expedient to remove, I shall always rejoice to hear of your welfare, both as men, and as a Christian society. But infinitely happier will it be, if our conduct in life be such as shall secure our meeting where *the wicked will cease from troubling*, where all the prejudices and misunderstandings that disturb the harmony of Christians here, will vanish, and where we shall never be separated from one another any more.

I am, my Christian Friends,

Your affectionate Pastor,

J. PRIESTLEY.

* *Sermon*, 1794, ("published by the Unitarian Society,") pp. 21—30.

† See *supra*, pp. 194, 566.

P. S. As the time of my departure is uncertain, though not far distant, I cannot fix any particular time for the dissolution of our connexion; but I hope no great inconvenience will arise from this degree of uncertainty.

THE ANSWER OF THE CONGREGATION.

Hackney, 16th *March*, 1794.

Rev. and dear Sir,

We have received with extreme concern the communication of your intention to resign your pastoral office in this congregation; a connexion from which we had promised ourselves a great degree of benefit and happiness, and which our short experience has abundantly justified.

Whatever are the circumstances which have induced you to think of removing, it is some consolation to find, that it is not owing to any complaint to which we have given occasion, since you are pleased to bestow more praise upon our conduct than is its due.

We shall always reflect, with the highest satisfaction and with real gratitude, on your public services among us; and on none more than your establishment of lectures to the different classes of young persons. Convinced, as we are, that the most important advantages are likely to be derived to the rising generation from this institution, we shall be careful to keep this great point in view, in the choice of your successor.

In lamenting the separation which is about to take place between us, we feel particularly concerned, that your removal is to be to a country so distant, as wholly to cut off our personal intercourse with you; but we trust that Providence intends, by this event, to open to you a scene of greater usefulness; and it is this consideration which better reconciles us to the great loss which we ourselves are about to sustain.

Remote as may be the situation to which you find it expedient to remove, our hearts will go with you, and our affections embrace you; and nothing will afford us greater comfort, than to hear of your happiness and increasing means of doing good. If the attachment of those with whom you are about to live, is at all in proportion to the regret of those whom you are about to quit, you will have a sure pledge of future satisfaction.

We can take no merit to ourselves for having been ambitious to receive you into this society, at a time when persecution raged against you, since we consulted herein our duty and our best interests. But it gives us the deepest regret, that it was in this country that you should have suffered for the freedom of well-intentioned inquiries on subjects, respecting which every man is bound diligently to search for truth, and on which no man can assume a right to think for his neighbour. Without free discussion, truth cannot be ascertained, and it is the absence of free discussion which alone can perpetuate error.

Unable to deny the propriety of your retiring from a scene of things, where you can promise to yourself so little comfort, or perhaps even safety, we are at least bound to bear testimony to your irreproachable conduct, and to the patience with which you have borne your sufferings. At the same time, we must lament the stigma which our nation will have brought upon itself, both with Europe and with posterity, for having forced one of the first of men, of Christians, and of philosophers, to seek in foreign countries an asylum from the insults and injuries, which he had experienced in his own, in the pursuit of religious truth.

In the pleasing hope of a happy and indissoluble union hereafter, to which time cannot put an end, we remain with every sentiment of gratitude and esteem in behalf of the congregation,

Rev. and dear Sir,

Your respectful and sincere friends and fellow-christians.

Signed by all the members of a committee deputed for this purpose by the congregation.

The Address of the Young Men and Women, who attend the Lectures on the Subject of Natural and Revealed Religion.

To the Rev. Dr. PRIESTLEY.

Rev. and dear Sir,

YOUR intention of quitting this country being now made known, accept the warmest sentiments of gratitude from those who, besides having benefited by your pastoral services, have also profited by your Lectures to young persons on the subject of religion. The merit of this institution, which is all your own, has its best evidence in the impression it has made on the minds of us your pupils. Through your means we not only feel confirmed in our faith in religion, but better disposed to the performance of our various duties; the knowledge of which you have thus rendered clearer to our judgment, and the practice of which you have enforced to us by new and animating motives. Exemplary in your own life, and firm under persecution, you have hereby superadded the strongest proof of the sincerity and the efficacy of your different precepts.

It is not permitted to us to deprecate a separation which is judged necessary for your comfort and safety, and which Providence has perhaps designed, in order to extend your usefulness; but we must at least lament, that our own happiness is no longer to remain so intimately connected with yours.

It is some consolation, however, that we can at least give you pleasure, by endeavouring to pursue your pious and wise instructions, and shewing that you have not laboured in vain to make us firm Christians and virtuous characters. Among other marks of our attachment, we shall hold it as a principal duty to promote at all

times, in the congregations to which we belong, the institution of Lectures to young persons, of which we consider you as the founder, being firmly persuaded, from our own experience, of their religious and moral advantages.

Permit us to add our thanks for the present you have made to the library, of your valuable works, by the perusal of which, both ourselves and those who follow us, must endeavour to mitigate the memory of the loss sustained by the discontinuance of your personal instructions.

That your voyage may be safe and expeditious, and that, during the remainder of your life, you may enjoy uninterrupted happiness, is the earnest wish, and ardent prayer of,

Reverend and dear Sir,

Your grateful and affectionate Pupils.

Signed by forty-one names.

END OF VOLUME XV.

GEORGE SMALLFIELD, PRINTER, HACKNEY.

University of California
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024-1388
Return this material to the library
from which it was borrowed.

QL APR 07 1997

REC'D YRL MAR 03 '00

AD-UR

A

DE
N

Form L

THE BIOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
AA 000 093 492 7
3 1158 00195 4501

Un